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**EXPERIMENTS IN THE ART OF
THE THEATRE**

TERENCE GRAY

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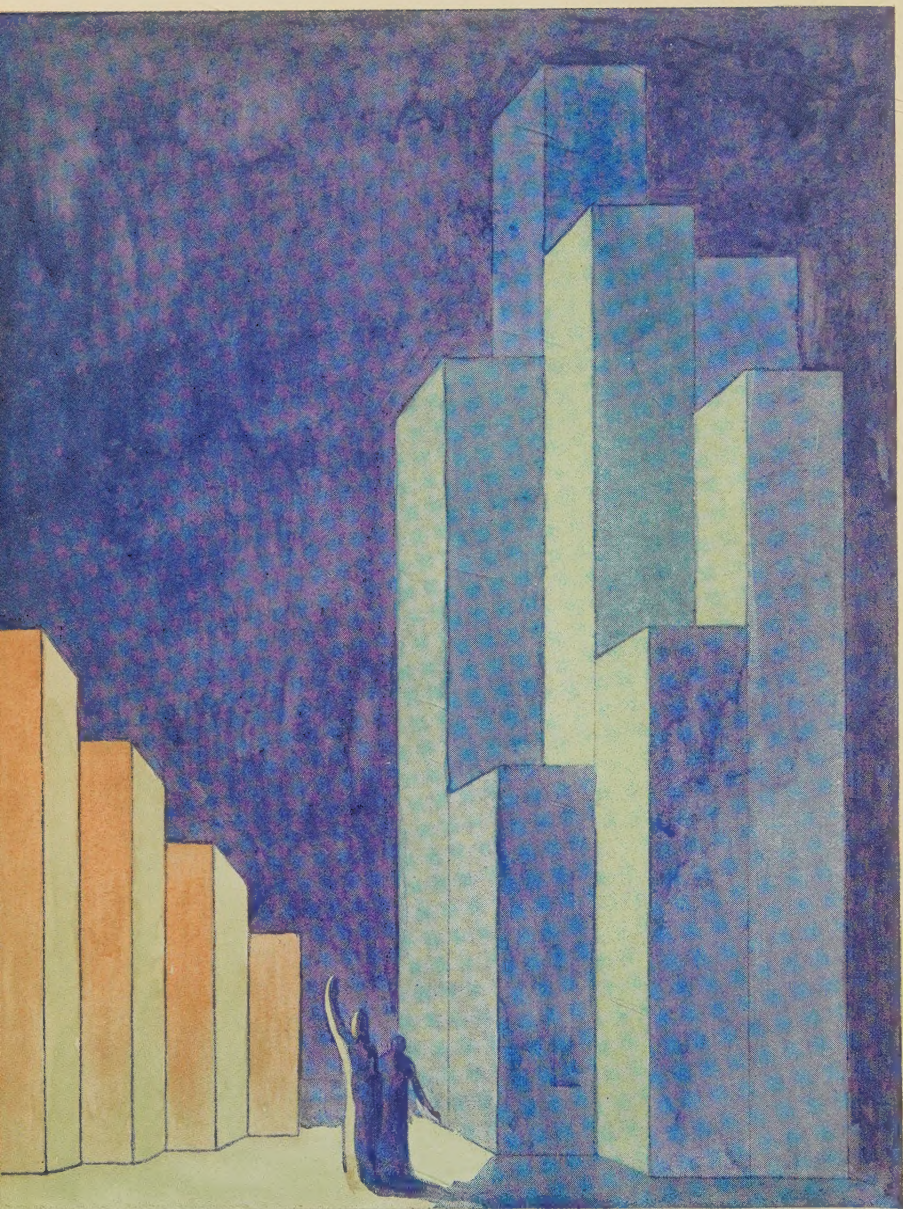
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DANCE-DRAMA.

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A Sketch Impression of
THE TREMENDOUS LOVER. SCENE II.
Using luminous screens.

TERENCE GRAY

DANCE-DRAMA
EXPERIMENTS IN THE ART
OF THE THEATRE

ILLUSTRATED

CAMBRIDGE
W. HEFFER & SONS LIMITED
1926

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DEDICATION.

THIS endeavour to extend the boundaries of Dramatic Art, and the dance-dramas that illustrate it, I dedicate to any young dancer who is possessed of imagination and intelligence—if there be such an one—who has the curiosity to look over the walls that hem in his or her art, who has sufficient of the spirit of adventure to explore the horizon that lies beyond, one for whom dancing is something more than its technique, one who is not only a dancer but also an artist of the Theatre.

R 303073

Acknowledgments.

I WISH to express my gratitude to my friends who have helped me in the publication of this book, to Mrs. W. M. Brunton for her interesting and intriguing cover-design and charming illustration of the *Scorpions of Ysit*, to the Editor of *Poetry and The Play*, in which *The Tremendous Lover* appeared, to Mr. C. S. Brownlow for his expressive figures and skilful drawing of the other pictures in this book, and to Mr. C. Harold Ridge for his usual invaluable help in every stage of illustration and publication.

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Contents.

| | PAGE |
|---------------------------|------|
| DEDICATION - - - - - | iv |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS - - - - - | v |

Part I.

| | | |
|---|-----------|----|
| I. THE TYRANNY OF WORDS (1) | - - | 3 |
| The Duration of Plays. | | |
| Dramatic Festivals. | | |
| II. THE DEGRADATION OF DRAMA | - - | 7 |
| Drama and the L.C.C. | | |
| The Appeal of the Greek Drama. | | |
| Celts and Anglo-Saxons. | | |
| The Religious Play. | | |
| III. DRAMATIC FESTIVALS | - - - - | 16 |
| IV. THE TYRANNY OF WORDS (2) | - - | 19 |
| The Duration of Speeches. | | |
| V. THE TYRANNY OF WORDS (3) | - - | 21 |
| Spells and Limitations. | | |
| Extended Boundaries and the Literary Drama. | | |
| Environment as a Medium of Expression. | | |
| Movement as a Medium of Expression. | | |
| Mime as a Medium of Expression. | | |
| VI. DANCING | - - - - - | 31 |
| The Russian Ballet. | | |
| Art and Expression. | | |
| The Dance-Dramatist. | | |
| The Organisation of Dance-Drama. | | |
| Jean Georges Noverre. | | |
| Technique. | | |
| Health and Technique. | | |
| VII. ENVIRONMENT | - - - - - | 46 |
| The Use of Luminous Screens as Stage Setting. | | |

Part II.

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|----|
| I. EXPERIMENTS IN THE ART OF THE | | |
| THEATRE | - - - - | 53 |
| II. THE ETERNAL RHYTHM. A Fantasy | | |
| and a Philosophy | - - - - | 60 |

Part II.—(*continued*).

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| III. THE POISONED KISS. A Dance-Drama of Anglo-Saxon Days - - - | 83 |
| IV. THE RENAISSANCE. A Symbolical Dance- Drama of the Middle Ages - - - | 107 |
| V. THE SCORPIONS OF YSIT. An Egyptian Legend - - - - - | 115 |
| VI. THE CARDINAL'S BRACELET. A Study of the Cinquecento - - - | 127 |
| VII. THE TREMENDOUS LOVER. The Story of Deirdre of the Sorrows - - - | 137 |

List of Illustrations.

*THE TREMENDOUS LOVER. Scene 2. *Frontispiece*

| | FACING PAGE |
|---|-------------|
| I. THE ETERNAL RHYTHM - - - | 79 |
| II. THE POISONED KISS. Scene I - - - | 90 |
| *III. " " " Scene 2 - - - | 94 |
| IV. " " " Scene 3 - - - | 98 |
| V. " " " Scene 4 - - - | 102 |
| VI. THE RENAISSANCE - - - - - | 110 |
| VII. THE SCORPIONS OF YSIT - - - | 122 |
| VIII. THE CARDINAL'S BRACELET - - - | 132 |
| IX. THE TREMENDOUS LOVER. Scene I - - - | 142 |
| *X. " " " Scene 3 - - - | 151 |

* These three illustrations are in colour.

PART I.

I.

The Tyranny of Words (I).

WHEN an art comes under the sway of commerce there arises a damnable tendency to stereotype its technique. But nothing is more fatal to the health and evolution of an art than the confinement of its channels of expression.

Commerce has laid upon drama a spell by whose workings it shall exist only according to the number of words in which it is set down. The sentries who guard the highways by which drama is permitted to enter the land of promise demand a passport that shall conform to the most arbitrary verbal formulæ. A play is judged not only by the number of words that it contains, but also by the number of words any person in it is given to speak. The quality of those words is at most a secondary consideration.

The Duration of Plays.

It is a monstrous convention that every play must occupy two and a half hours in the playing. But it is a still more monstrous convention that every utterance shall be a clipped staccato rapping out of thought, a half-expressed idea, stillborn or left to die. That drama cannot be so confined is abundantly being made apparent. There are, doubtless, limits to the period, either as regards length or brevity, for which people may be willing to go into a theatre, but those limits are considerably more expansible than the present convention allows. There is no reason why a play of an hour's duration should not be given twice nightly at half-prices, nor why a five-hour performance should be more impracticable to-day than at other periods of the

world's history when it was itself the ruling convention. A man or a woman who is seriously interested in dramatic art will go to see a play that he or she wishes to see whatever may be the duration of its playing, just as a man or woman will go to see a picture or a statue whether it be a colossus or a miniature; and the casual playgoer has a varying range of impulses and circumstances governing his life according to which he would as often find it convenient to pass a short hour, late or early, at a reduced expenditure, in a theatre, as he would find it convenient to arrange to devote to it the major portion of his day or his night.

The present convention is utterly superficial and without adequate foundations in the life and conditions of the times, for religious services, lectures, and political meetings are not decreed to last for two hours and a half, but for, approximately, one only, and people do not go to Brighton, Margate, Hampstead Heath or the Thames valley for recreation for less than five hours at a stretch. But the breaking of a convention is not easy in any age, and the rousing of set and unimaginative mentalities to vary their habits is not to be achieved without making a great deal of unnecessary noise. A convention is essentially a spell, and a habit is as sacred as a superstition.

But dramatic art is not to be held by spell or by superstition, and plays set forth on a vast canvas are again coming into existence. Mr. Shaw has re-established the principle throughout the world with his "Back to Methuselah," though, years ago, Ibsen attempted it with his "Peer Gynt" and "Emperor and Galilean," and these pieces, being dramatic art of the best quality, have actually been produced. Bjornson did it in "Beyond Our Power," and there have been others from the Orestaea of Æschylus to Shakespeare's Histories and from them to the "Dynasts" of Thomas Hardy and my own attempts at epic drama, just as there have been, in recent years at least, plays of duration varying from ten minutes to the eternal

two hours and a half. But have these vast and miniature canvasses shaken the two-and-a-half-hour spell? Oh no! It takes something more than the mere existence of great art to render inoperative the effect of an incantation, or to resolve a complex in the managerial mind. The spell has merely been circumvented, and the production of the plays achieved without in any way damaging the sacred rite. Either the plays have been surgically treated, or they have been telescoped, or they have been carved up into two-and-a-half-hour sections and presented at succeeding performances, or, in the case of the miniatures, they have been presented in two-and-a-half-hour collections like mixed lots at an auction. Abominable as may be the two former of these compromises with superstition, there is indeed little to be said against the two latter if the method should happen to be expedient, and one may at least hope that this system will be more widely exploited. Much as one would like to see the duration of playing adapting itself entirely to the dimensions of the play, if the play must adapt itself instead to the formula of two-and-a-half-hours it can at least be done this way, and become a factor in the bringing into existence of regular dramatic festivals.

Dramatic Festivals.

This magnificent system of festivals should prove a solution for nearly all the more pressing problems of dramatic art, but it seems to be making as yet but little progress in the minds of our generation. So far as I know it has never yet even been detailed in print, and until this is done, and the arduous processes of publicity and the cajolling and cudgelling of public mental processes into new channels is commenced, little is likely to be achieved.

Everyone knows how it was in Greece in the beginning, how dramatic performances were confined to the annual religious and athletic festivals at which the competitions took place for which were written all the masterpieces

of Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes, and at which the entire populace attended throughout the whole of a number of days.

We do not have these great public holidays to-day, and our religious and our athletic festivals are separate and more widely diffused throughout the year, but the principle is not too far divorced from our conditions to be adapted, and in Ireland there has been reinstated after a lapse of centuries a close national equivalent in the Tailtin Games. Moreover, Europe has the annual athletic festival of the Olympiad, Scotland has an annual athletic festival which goes as far as to include dancing, while Wales has an annual musical festival in her Eisteddfod, Germany has had musical festivals at Bayreuth, France and Italy send state-supported dramatic companies annually to give a season of serious drama in the surviving classical theatres at Orange, Nîmes, and Syracuse, and England has a yearly Shakespearean festival at Stratford-on-Avon. Among these modern peoples Ireland, having an incomparably more ancient cultural tradition, an isolated history and a separate racial origin, provides an opportunity that approaches most nearly to the classical conditions if these may be regarded as ideal. Clearly, however, they need not be ideal under the circumstances of modern life, and the isolated festivals of these Teutonic and Latin countries may at least be an adequate, if not a preferable, pattern on which to build up the dramatic festivals that shall surely come into being.

II.

The Degradation of Drama.

The fundamental cause of the present state of dramatic art, the basic factor in the inhibition which hinders its development and full expression is the popularity of the theatre as a means of public diversion, relaxation and digestion. This popularity in itself is a great blessing to the community, and only an æsthetic Roundhead, whom an age of inverted intellectual snobs insist on calling in attempted irony by the complimentary name of High-brow, would grudge the light-hearted and light-headed their theatrical "show," the harassed city workers their mental relaxation in trivial fuss-about-nothing plays, and the wealthy over-eaters their theatrical bismuth. But it is nevertheless unfortunate that the commercial exploitation of these popular amusements should have deprived the artistic and intellectual community of the means of practising and enjoying dramatic art.

Drama and the L.C.C.

Among the forty odd theatres in the west of London there is not one in which the art of the theatre is seriously practised, because commercial exploitation has resulted, first, in the cost of a theatre and its administration having become so exorbitant that dramatic work can be made self-supporting only by filling it to its complement at amusement prices for a very great number of performances for each work presented; and, secondly, in the subjection of the theatre, without discrimination as to its use, to a system of licensing regulations that render the first cost of building prohibitive, except for subsequent commercial purposes,

and that actually do not permit of the production of dramatic work in accordance with the requirements of modern methods of stage-craft.

But the intellectual and artistic community is necessarily limited in numbers and diffuse in habitation. It is also but sparsely recruited from the wealthy; indeed, where the rich congregate, whether it be in London, Monte Carlo, Deauville, or where you will, stupidity in entertainment, and most of all in the theatre, appears always to be at a premium.

That section of the artistic and intellectual community which is chiefly interested in the pictorial and plastic branches of art has little difficulty in supporting its picture galleries and salons, some of which are maintained by the State and Municipality (the self-same Municipality which not only does not support, but actually, though indirectly, prohibits the practise of dramatic art), for they can convert to their purposes any existing building of suitable dimensions which can be helped in its maintenance by the renting as offices, flats, shops, workrooms or restaurants of those floors which are not required for their own purposes. With those whose pre-occupation or recreation is music the same facilities exist, and, with the sole exception of grand opera, which comes into the sphere of dramatic art, there is no obstacle, financial or municipal, to the practice and development of music.

If, as certainly should be the case, conditions were similar for those concerned with the drama, there would no longer be cause for complaint; the art of the theatre could develop freely in the British Isles and achieve the standard attained a decade or more ago on the Continent, which is less hampered by the same causes and at any rate does not suffer from the curse of the London County Council; and a section of the cultured community would not labour under a great injustice and be deprived of rights which no organised section of the people would suffer for a month. But this scattered unorganised dramatic community, more numerous

no doubt than the pictorial and plastic, less so at present, through artistic starvation, than the musical, is utterly unable to maintain a west London theatre practising serious dramatic art in commercial rivalry with popular amusement and public entertainment. That it should be expected so to do is in the highest degree ludicrous, for the conditions governing the two are utterly diverse, and the imposition on an artistic endeavour of standards which popular spectacle has brought down upon itself is almost as ridiculous as would be an attempt to hold a concert or exhibition of pictures according to the conditions that govern a League football match. There is but this in common between them that they both use a type of building, externally similar, called a theatre.

The name "theatre," of course, is properly used to cover any structure in which a spectacle or performance takes place, but in origin the modern theatre was designed for the purposes of dramatic art. In the course of time popularity came to the theatre, and bastard species of entertainment came into existence to cope with and to feed this ever-increasing popularity. These spectacles and performances, together with inferior machine-made plays turned out by hack-writers and money-seeking adventurers, increased and multiplied, and by slow degrees choked out of existence the genuine art of the theatre until it survived only in Shakespearean revivals by actor-managers and occasional unprofitable productions by sincere and ambitious actors and actresses for their own glorification. But the bastard theatre-work won the day and almost completely overwhelmed the genuine drama until the form of the theatre became stereotyped to its requirements, and theatres were built only for the maximum profit-gaining of the financial syndicates who carried on the degradation of the drama.

The stages of these establishments, scintillating with tinsel, heaped up with paper, cardboard, muslin, and every imaginable inflammable gaudy tawdriness, lit with flaring gas-jets, caught fire, and throughout a

decade or two produced a series of appalling accidents and conflagrations. Then the municipal authorities very rightly awoke to their responsibilities and inaugurated a system of licensing, and laid down elaborate conditions which should govern all theatrical construction and scenic production thenceforward. From that day to this they have gone on elaborating these conditions and restrictions unceasingly, maintaining throughout as the basis of their regulations the exact form of theatre-construction which obtained when the original conflagrations took place. Meantime, however, two things have happened, unnoticed by these cloistered protectors of the public. The drama, the Art of the Theatre, has risen from its ashes, and someone has invented electricity.

Now the revived art of the theatre, evolved theoretically by Englishmen such as Gordon Craig, and both evolved and put into practice on the Continent by innumerable artists of the theatre, has developed rapidly, and appears to be approaching a renaissance, but in its development it has found that it is necessary fundamentally to alter the form of the stage, and even of the theatre as a whole. The regulations of the London County Council, however, based on the requirements, ancient or modern, of the popular playhouses, do not permit of such alterations. These regulations lay down that a theatre must have a proscenium of such-and-such relative dimensions, that the scene-dock must be in such-and-such a relative position, that the dressing-rooms, lavatories, stairs, cupboards, seats, and every minutest detail must be exactly according to their venerable theories as to where these things have been and always should be. But the development of the art of the theatre does not permit of such a proscenium, does not perhaps permit of a proscenium at all, requires a type of scenery that could not be stored in a scene-dock so placed, and, in short, could not possibly conform to these inapplicable regulations. Moreover, the regulations have become so meticulous, so all-embracing, so

utterly extravagant, inelastic, and regardless of cost, that no theatre could be built without a capital expenditure that would necessitate its entering into commercial rivalry with the existing theatres and becoming one of them in order to maintain its existence.

The invention of electricity has had a double effect on this problem. It has proved the foremost factor in the recent development of stage-craft, without which the present renaissance of the art of the theatre could never have come about, and it has displaced the flaring gas-jets that caused the conflagrations which originally produced the licensing regulations under discussion. Now the present development of dramatic art does not employ the tinsels, the paper, the muslins and the gaudy tawdrinesses which the flaring gas-jets used to set on fire, and insulated electricity has replaced the flaring gas-jets which set on fire the gaudy tawdrinesses. But the regulations, necessary, no doubt, originally, not only remain, but have been steadily and continually increased, multiplied, extended and intensified, so that a munition factory must appear unregulated in comparison. Anyhow, however necessary and applicable the most costive old bureaucrat could conceivably consider them as applied to the popular playhouse, they are not in any wise either necessary or applicable to a theatre devoted to dramatic art, were one to be built, since both in architectural construction and in the use to which that construction would be put, such a theatre would be out of all relation to the regulations.

It is clear, then, that a theatre devoted to dramatic art cannot be built, nor can an existing theatre be adapted owing, firstly, to these regulations, and, secondly, as a result of these regulations, to the cost involved. Nor, again, can an ordinary building, or part of a building, be utilised for experiments in stage-craft and production for the benefit of a small audience of persons interested in the drama, as it can for purposes of pictorial art or music, because these regulations do not permit it, do not even permit a man to risk his own

life by living over his own theatre, and certainly do not permit any other trade or business to be carried on in the same perilous building, as would in most cases be necessary in order to bring in rent and so relieve the financial burden of the promoters. Needless to say, save for those unused to the technical portions of theatres, even popular playhouses bear no resemblance to munition-factories, as might be supposed by anyone reading the published regulations of the London County Council, nor to volcanoes, nor any other combustible, eruptive, or explosive inventions of man or of nature. They are at least as safe as a restaurant or any other public resort where there is light, heat and woven fabric, and considerably safer than any crowded public thoroughfare.

This is the fundamental inhibition, and I have been obliged to set it out at such length because it appears to be so little realised or understood save by those who have been actually concerned in dramatic enterprises in London, and it both underlies and outweighs in importance all the other attempted explanations of the lack of serious dramatic art in the great metropolis, such as the distribution of blame among actors, managers and the general public, nine-tenths of whom are by temperament and by calling utterly outside the whole problem.

The Appeal of the Greek Drama.

In the country districts the problem is very different. The instinctive and natural appreciation of drama which must have underlain the popularity of the Greek plays and the mediæval mysteries appears to be entirely lacking in the general Anglo-Saxon population of to-day. It is not likely that the populace or the peasantry of Athens were cognisant of the literary merits of the great plays that they saw, but that they should have crowded to see them indicates that they must have been sensitive to some appeal that those plays had for them. Like the mediæval mysteries the Greek plays were religious

in origin and in spirit, and the personages portrayed were familiar figures that had lived in the popular imagination from the infancy of each individual.

Celts and Anglo-Saxons.

The Anglo-Saxon populace has no such appreciation of great drama, has, indeed, no appreciation whatever of any serious form of drama at all, and neither in town nor in country would the people in general flock to see its performance. This, I think, is the explanation. Save in Gaelic Ireland, in Gaelic Scotland, and in British Wales, no figures of popular tradition, no gods and heroes survive in the public imagination, there no longer exists in the thoughts or the memory of the people any trace of a folk-history or mythology as a basis for imaginative thought. For this reason the lives of the peasantry are devoid of natural poetry, and the minds of the people, whether of town or of country, have not in them the material from which a spontaneous and uncultured appreciation of romantic drama might arise. In Southern Ireland this is not so, for from childhood, even to-day, confused and hazy race-memories of early history and vague legends of heroic national figures are part of the lives and conversation of the people. In England this died out with the Arthurian cycle in the Middle-ages.

The Religious Play.

On the religious side, however, this contention can still be illustrated in England, for the Bible stories and the heroes of biblical tradition are still part of the family education and are implanted in the minds of the children from their earliest years. Consequently we see, wherever a drama on a religious subject is produced, an instantaneous popular success, almost regardless of the merits of the work. It is true that this is not due solely to the introduction of heroes and popular figures from Bible history. In religious plays of modern life it may be attributed to the sentimentality, the primitive

religious emotions that are appealed to, the emotional lure of sin and repentance, the sympathetic catharsis experienced in watching the resolution of the guilt-complexes produced by the abominable system of repressive moral education to which the people have been subjected from infancy. But even this in its emotional basis is an integral part of the appeal of the Greek plays to the uncultured section of their audiences, and from the Mysteries of the Middle-ages, the Ober-ammagau Passion-play, Maeterlinck's "Mary Magdalene," Masefield's "Good Friday," and "Joseph and his Brethren," to such plays as "The Sign of the Cross," the ancient popular appeal of the Greek drama is exemplified in the modern world.

It is not strange that this should be so, for how could it be expected that people, of whatever culture, should be interested in a life that is not their life, in thoughts and actions that are not of the world that they know, in circumstances that bear no relation to those which affect their own being? To the whole community this principle may be said to apply, save only to artists and those technically interested in the drama, for no one can be emotionally concerned with sensations that have no point of contact with those which are experienced by himself. If those persons who bewail the indifference and obtuseness of the people of any district, where drama is concerned, will produce there a religious play, I am entirely certain that they will meet with an instantaneous and overwhelming public response save only that the puritan prejudice against the dramatic use of biblical personages have not too powerfully survived.

That a similar success can be obtained with plays of industrial and agricultural life is more doubtful. Capable writers with enough personal experience of the subject-matter to write sufficiently convincingly to satisfy so critical an audience of experts are very rare, and of necessity the treatment can never soar beyond a somewhat dead realism, but it is an achievement that is

constantly attained in such playhouses as the Abbey theatre in Dublin, and, in varying degrees of success, in most parts of the British Isles, and even in London itself. Popular, indeed, these plays may be, but, alas, it is seldom that they can be said to enter the domain of serious dramatic art or of the art of the theatre with which we are concerned.

III.

Dramatic Festivals.

These, and indeed most of the toughest problems with which dramatic art is harassed and hindered in present circumstances become simpler and well-nigh disappear when they are tackled under the conditions which would attend a regular dramatic festival. Where and on what occasions such festivals could best be held it is scarcely possible at present to declare. In Ireland the chief one should most certainly take place in connection with the celebration of the Tailtin Games. In Scotland it should be possible to hold one as part of the annual Braemar Gathering, and in Wales as an extension of the Eisteddfod. An international one, if possible state-supported, could well accompany each Olympiad. As regards England it is more difficult to give practical suggestions. It is at least essential that a place of general popular resort should be chosen, for people will not travel to Glastonbury or Bristol to see any play. Devotees go to Stratford, it is true, and attend the Shakespearean festivals there to the complement of the town, and it might well be possible to extend the facilities to the larger needs of the wider endeavour, but Stratford is essentially a place for enthusiasts, for it is several hours' journey from the metropolis and presents no other attractions to visitors than the single and solemn one of dramatic art. A popular holiday resort near London, such as Brighton, is to be more seriously considered, but even so such a place attracts but a limited and largely unintelligent congregation of people. Bath, also, though possible, has to-day too restricted a normal population of visitors.

Centres both of learning and of social life, on the other hand, such as Oxford and Cambridge, present considerably more favourable possibilities, and a dramatic festival held annually in connection with the summer-time

boat races, social festivities, and subsequent public courses of lectures, would be clearly practicable and would be a noble national achievement on the part of either university. Were it possible, of course, London itself, in a theatre constructed in one of the great parks, would be the best of all centres, but the bureaucratic obstructions to be overcome would be almost insuperable, and the festival would suffer from still being beneath the jurisdiction of the London County Council, whose concern lest the park in question should suddenly go up in smoke would no doubt prohibit everything.

The occasions on which such a festival would be held should certainly coincide with the principal public holidays, and Sunday should always be the greatest day. Here again London, with its bureaucratic tyranny, labours under considerable disadvantage. The month of August is unsuitable save the festival be at a seaside resort, and even then, of questionable choice since it would interfere with the great annual holidays of all those who wished to attend and yet preferred to spend their only free weeks in other places.

There should most certainly be an open-air theatre for this festival, and all daylight performances should take place in it. These should commence immediately after breakfast, a most excellent and unaccountably neglected time of day for the performance of a play, and should continue until nightfall. The unreliability of the climate is in this connection more of a bogey than a reality, and would interfere with the performance of a play in no greater degree than it interferes with a cricket-match or a race-meeting, and its interference can be minimised in the same manner as at the tennis court at Wimbledon by protecting both stage and auditorium with temporary roofs. In the Roman theatres not only was the stage itself covered over, but the spectators were protected from sun and wind by the *velarium*.

Not all plays, however, could be so given, and the most important developments of the art of the theatre

can only find scope by employing the almost incalculable possibilities of artificial light. For such a festival a completely efficient theatre would have to be built, in which all conceivable future experiments could adequately be carried out.

The cost of such an enterprise would undoubtedly be considerable, but west London rents and land-values are not a burden that would have to be borne; moreover, the London County Council would not be likely even to hear of the enterprise for at least a century, and a site would be chosen which no imaginable extension of the metropolis would ever bring beneath its jurisdiction. Economy and rational construction could therefore be employed, and there is no reason why such buildings should cost more than any other buildings erected for purposes of sport, athletics, or general utility, and made self-supporting although in use only at certain seasons. In any case, such an undertaking would not be financed as a private commercial enterprise for profit, and as a solitary and national artistic endeavour money would be forthcoming from interested and public-spirited persons, if not from municipal, educational, and artistic bodies, to an extent which the usual dramatic enterprises could never hope to call forth. So that without the burden of continuous and artificially inflated charges, which drain the resources of ordinary theatres, from the number of feet of land that they cover down to the minutest detail of their over-elaborated construction, maintenance and administration, it should be by no manner of means of great difficulty to finance satisfactorily such a festival.

There, freed from all the trammels of bureaucratic interference and commercial competition, dramatic artists and all artists of the theatre would be at liberty under almost ideal conditions to practise their art at their convenience for the benefit of a public who knew where to go in order to satisfy its interest and who would increase in ever-widening circles until the drama became once more a national and popular enthusiasm.

IV.

The Tyranny of Words (2).

The Duration of Speeches.

It is sufficiently monstrous that the duration of a play should have to conform to a senseless convention and that the number of words in which it is written should form a standard upon which it will be judged. That it should be judged also according to the number of words given to individual persons in it to speak is an additional and equal absurdity of present-day methods. Yet it is one which even the more cultured and enlightened type of director and critic may be heard to express.

The underlying theory appears to be that, in the theatre, ideas should be outlined in short clipped sentences and dropped for ever, for otherwise the play will drag and the audience relax its attention. If a play is written in a certain technique which relies upon continuous action in order to hold the interest of its audience, and which is not concerned with subtleties of thought, of emotion, or of human relationships, such a standard of judgment may be in a sense justifiable, but it is as ridiculous to apply such a theory to every kind of play as it would be to judge a dancer by the standards applicable to an acrobat.

There is, I think, little doubt that the most popular and generally appreciated moments of Shakespeare's plays are those in which occur the famous long speeches, and, to come down to modern times, the two most enjoyable and stimulating plays which have been seen in recent years—Mr. C. K. Munro's "The Rumour" and "Progress"—consist almost exclusively from beginning to end of interminable speeches and harangues that occupy, in print, anything up to eight pages. It is, therefore, not even a question of verse or prose, nor yet of erudition, epigram or wit, for Mr. Munro's politicians and leaders of deputations are for the most

part as devoid of knowledge and humour as are the reality in the world in which we live. Often indeed, it is the sheer unimaginable boredom of their orations that constitute the interest and amusement that attend their utterance.

There is, therefore, no essential truth in the contention that long speeches or elaborated or reiterated ideas must be uninteresting and irritating on the stage. It would even seem to be considerably the reverse, and a long ill-conceived utterance, with the greater opportunities for clarity and explanation occasioned by its very length, may prove more interesting and less exasperating than a succession of short ill-expressed and insufficiently-defined ideas rapped out and bandied about in the artificial manner that must result from that system. Both can be dull and badly expressed, as a lecture can be dull and badly expressed, but it is clear that the boundaries of first-rate dramatic art must be made wide enough to include, if a play demand it, either a full length political speech or even a lecture itself.

As with the duration of a play, the outposts of which have already been established on the one hand by first-rate little miniatures of ten-minutes playing, such as Sir James Barrie has given us, and on the other by vast canvasses such as Shakespeare's *Histories* and Shaw's "*Back to Methuselah*," so the limits of individual declamation have been already widely set by the incoherent and almost unintelligible bandying of single words and syllables in the fine dramas of Wedekind and by the pages-long orations in the better plays of Mr. Munro. These limiting dicta of the pundits must be exposed and defied and exploded if drama is to flourish and enjoy its fullest freedom, the inflated mentality of the journalistic critics must be pricked, and their vision educated to an automatically adaptable focus that will see each dramatic work in its own proper perspective rather than through a fixed lens that is trained only on to one type of endeavour.

V.

The Tyranny of Words (3).

Probably there are as many different kinds of drama as there are different kinds of dogs, of roses, or of motor-cars. It is even probable that there are as many different kinds of plays as there are different kinds of human beings. But whether the number of categories into which we choose to divide them be great or small, it is at least absurd to apply to all a standard that is applicable to one only. Yet this is undoubtedly not only the aim and ambition but actually the attempted practice of almost every journalistic critic and theatrical *entrepreneur*. It is true that both pose as interpreters in the service of the public, but, as I have suggested, the public contains at least as many different kinds of human beings as there are different kinds of plays for their enjoyment.

There are, perhaps, but two standards of judgment that are applicable to all kinds of theatrical production, but two dicta to which all dramatic work must conform in order to be worthy of serious consideration. These are, firstly, that a theatrical performance shall not be essentially dull, and, secondly, that it shall in its form and scope fall within the proper limits of that with which a theatre is concerned. Since a final definition is scarcely possible, I will express this again in other words. A theatrical performance, of whatever description, is inadmissible and *a priori* to be condemned if it necessarily cause in the mind a negative reaction to interest, and if in its form and construction it fall without the limits of use to which a theatre as such can properly be put. For instance, a phonographically recorded reproduction of an essentially commonplace and—literally—insignificant incident of contemporary everyday life (to

which definition many plays of the present day very closely approximate in parts if not in their entirety) is essentially inadmissible as dramatic art, so also is an unintelligible chaos of thought and expression, and, on the other hand, the use of a theatre for the purposes of a political, industrial or scientific meeting, for a lecture, for social propaganda, or for a tailoring or millinery parade, unless these have a genuine dramatic significance.

Spells and Limitations.

Within these limits the art of the theatre should be free and untrammelled, and every attainable form should be welcomed and encouraged by those in a position of authority within it, and it should be the business of those whose thought flows in that direction to explore and elaborate and develop all the potentialities that may exist in dramatic art, for every potentiality so developed within those limits will make that art the richer and the more vital, and will bring to it a new and enthusiastic following that before had not found in life or in art the full expression of its inner strivings and enthusiasms.

Tyrannies and arbitrary limitations imposed by spectacular persons of restricted vision or by mechanical convention must no longer shut in the horizon of dramatic art. Neither by its total number of words nor by the number of words given to individual persons in a play is its merit in any wise affected. Whether the artist clothe his thought in monosyllables or elaborate his ideas in woven phrases is solely a question of the technique he employs. But having thus expanded the limits of dramatic art have we thereby exhausted its capacity for expansion? Indeed we have but been dealing with the problem of words. But are words the only or the essential medium of dramatic art? Is drama necessarily a matter of the manipulation of words? The essence of drama is the expression of emotion and idea in their relation to the vital problems

of human life; it is the revelation of that which is significant in the relations of human beings one with another; it is the visible working out and the demonstration of the eternal verities that lie in the fabric of human life. For this purpose words are a potent and readily understood medium, perhaps the best possible medium for the expression of thought and emotion, but that they should be decreed the only medium is a limitation and a tyranny more monstrous than those we have already discussed. The extension to its limits of the horizon of the literary drama is but a single facet of the problem of the fullest possible development of dramatic art as a whole.

Extended Boundaries and the Literary Drama.

I have heard a large gathering of dramatic enthusiasts, many of them distinguished persons, assembled for the purpose, debate whether a play to be good must necessarily be good literature. Mr. John Drinkwater, in opening the discussion, categorically asserted that interesting as the subject might be in debate, there could be no possible question but that a great play must also be great literature. The essentials of the problem were not touched upon by anybody during this debate, which is a singular proof of how slightly the essential character of dramatic art is realised or generally comprehended at the present time. I have no hesitation whatever in declaring that Mr. John Drinkwater was definitely and unquestionably wrong. He was, in fact, merely begging the question, because he was clearly referring only to the literary drama, to which his remarks were completely applicable, and no one present appeared to suspect that there could be any other form of dramatic art in existence, or that drama could express itself by means of any other medium than words.

Environment as a Medium of Expression.

The evolution that has taken place in the art of theatrical production during the last two decades

(needless to say, not in England where theatrical evolution is rendered practically impossible by the limiting conditions which are oppressing the theatre), has resulted in the development of the expressive power of the environment in which a play is presented to an extent which takes from the shoulders of the spoken word the burden of revealing much that can be more fully expressed by other means. Artists of the theatre have so revolutionised and re-conceived stage scenery that by inspired construction of masses and by the skilled manipulation of the immensely powerful factor of coloured light, a medium of expression has been developed that is as potent, within its limitations, in the expression of dramatic realities and in the revelation of emotion as can ever be the words of a poet. Since science has delivered into the hands of the artist the immense possibilities of electricity as a medium of artistic expression a new view of the limitations of drama has become necessary. The result of this is that the words in which a play of the future shall be written shall have a less ubiquitous and exclusive part to play in the achievement of dramatic effect, and consequently they will be called upon to retire within narrower limits and to give place to a more potent medium of expression, one better suited to the efficient conveyance of certain effects. Stage scenery, once conceived of merely as an adequate background for the declamation of the spoken word and the action of the human actors, or as a method of creating the illusion of a real world, and light, once regarded merely as a means of rendering visible the persons on the stage or of assisting the attempted illusion of the scenery, have become themselves vital and potent factors in the actual expression of the drama that is being performed. The reactionary would declare that they have in some degree usurped the proper functions of the spoken word; rather is it the fact that they have provided a more powerful vehicle of expression in certain directions, and have relieved the spoken word of the necessity of

bearing a burden for which it is imperfectly adapted. The dividing line between the sphere of verbal and plastic-pictorial expression is doubtless ill-defined, but it is certain at least that however far the one intrude into the domain of the other the duplication of their function by a double and redundant expression will not long be tolerable, and to a considerable extent the verbal will have to give way to the more potent medium of dramatic revelation. Words, then, once supreme in the theatre, once the solitary vehicle of drama, are now but one of several factors, and must decrease in importance as the developing forces prove more efficient for the work.

Movement as a Medium of Expression.

But there is yet another medium of dramatic expression which these poet-dramatists have overlooked, one that encroaches still more threateningly upon the sovereignty of the spoken word. There are, it will readily be conceded, many moments in dramatic art, moments that arise in the course of almost every great play that has ever been written, in which words become a strikingly inadequate medium for the expression of the emotion that they attempt to convey. Be the literary genius of the dramatist never so great, still must this inevitably be so, for this reason, that in real life, upon which all art is based, human beings are not so constructed that their brains can convey in words the full intensity of feeling in certain crises. Neither is it of the nature of man instantly to cast into the mould of words the chaotic upwelling of sudden and overwhelming emotions, nor, if the adequate verbal expression of those emotions should with any amount of thought and analysis ever subsequently be possible, does such consummate expression appear credible at the moment of experiencing the emotion. And if it is not credible it is dramatically unsound, and not only does not convey the desired dramatic effect but actually wrecks the carefully built up and cumulative effect of the play. Yet if the

intense emotions of these crises, which must inevitably form the climaxes of the plays in which they arise, are left inadequately expressed the audience is not able to experience the most vital revelations which the situations have in them to reveal and, consequently, the plays fail in their fullest possibilities. On this rock many great works of dramatic literature have been wrecked, and indeed there are few important dramatic works that have not in some degree come to grief from this cause. In divers cunning ways have the great dramatists of past and present ages sought to overcome this obstacle to the full expression of their thought, from the artificial lyric utterance of the old dramatists to the frantic tornado of unnatural eloquence of the school of Sardou, and the magical, emotionally charged and utter silence of Maeterlinck. Interesting and dramatically important as these experiments have been, not one of them has ever completely succeeded for the reason that success must inevitably be impossible, for words are definitely not a natural or adequate medium of expression at such moments. The most insistent effect of this limitation of verbal expression is the complete avoidance by the dramatist of such scenes, and the consequent loss to dramatic art of its most vital material.

It must, then, be conceded that there are moments in great drama for which words prove an inadequate medium for the expression of emotion. Always has this been so and always shall it be, and the limitation has never been more satisfactorily circumvented verbally than it was in the beginning by the Greeks who, demanding a convention in the matter, may be said to have proclaimed this intense emotional expression symbolic merely and so poured forth in rhetoric, with choral aid, a verbal expression of the emotions experienced by absent or silent sufferers whose calamity itself had only been indirectly conveyed by means of messengers. No more in this direction can ever be achieved save in eliminating the redundancy of verbal expression

altogether and substituting for it an intensified choral expression, making, where possible, the sufferer his own and the only chorus, expressing himself in mime and movement alone, aided by the new and potent medium of light, colour and mass, that is of expressive and changing scenic design revealing by means of the atmosphere it creates and reveals and intensifies the emotions that he is experiencing on the stage. At such moments, in fact, the character should dance.

Dancing, as I use the term, must be taken in its fullest meaning, must be understood to include all forms of studied movement, not the least of them studied immobility. It includes what is known as mime, it is mime rendered rhythmically, it is as verse to which mime is as prose, it is in fact every form of emotional expression by which the human-being can express himself, using his physical body as his medium. For the human soul has no other medium so potent for the expression of emotion, nor any medium so natural; and beside it the spoken word is as a complicated musical instrument which has to be learned intellectually ere its mechanism can be made to convey the commands of the will. The human body is a man's natural means of self-expression, and in primitive conditions, or before ever he learned to speak at all, it was and is his instinctive and immediate means of expressing the emotions which arise within him. Where words become artificial and unnatural, movement does not, because it can never be so, and when the upwelling surge of emotion becomes too overwhelming to permit of the exercise of selective thought and complicated and deliberate expression in chosen language the movement of the body is the only possible or adequate channel of expression and the one which in natural conditions comes into play. In art it should be as it is in life; and whether in such emotional crises as these, or in little matters that constitute a gesture merely, the use of the human body rather than the intellectualised spoken word is the medium that is most essential for dramatic art.

Mime as a Medium of Expression.

A decade and a half ago Max Reinhardt produced "Sumurun" in London. This beautiful and moving drama was immediately appreciated, and it has formed a landmark in dramatic history ever since. Not long afterwards a piece called "L'Enfant Prodigue" was given in London, and was likewise a popular success. So profound was the effect of these two dramas that they are given a chapter to themselves in almost every work on dramatic art that has appeared in recent years. Yet both were full-length plays and in neither was there a single spoken word. During that decade, also, were produced the great ballets of Fokine, in the days when the Russian ballet was making a serious contribution to dramatic art. The public appreciation of all these productions is a warrant of their intelligibility and power, but, popular success apart, no one who can remember these performances will fail to recall the vivid power with which the emotions and ideas of these moving pieces were revealed and borne in upon the audience. No literary drama could have more successfully conveyed the subject-matter of these works, in fact no literary drama could have achieved an effect in any near degree as profound with their subjects, and if it may be stated that there is dramatic subject-matter in which mime would be an inferior medium to words, it is also true vice-versa, and the claim of literature to a monopoly in dramatic art must clearly be declared inadmissible.

The essence of drama, then, is the expression of emotion and idea in their relation to human life and the interaction of human beings one upon another. The basic medium of this expression may be any function of the living body, according as subject-matter, technique or occasion may demand. The spoken word is unquestionably the most powerful medium for the expression of ideas because both subject and medium are on the intellectual plane. On the other hand, where emotion is concerned movement is the most

powerful and natural medium, for, here again, both are on the emotional plane. Not only in such crises of feeling as I have discussed, but in innumerable little moments of emotional reaction that pass unexpressed in a play, or are clumsily attempted in words, would movement effect an immediate and profound revelation. So completely has the literary drama taken possession of the theatre, however, that this medium is almost entirely neglected, and survives only in ballet and in the occasional abrupt gesture of the hand or the spontaneous reaction of the muscles of the face.

Here indeed have we laid bare a baneful and strangulating convention, here is a spell that lies heavy on the emaciated body of dramatic art. Whoever first uttered the incantation that darkened the minds of the lords of the theatre with this literary superstition, so potent is its force that the greatest of the artists of the theatre seem but dimly aware of the limitations under which it is constraining them to labour. But the spell must be broken ruthlessly and the darkness riven with intellectual light. "Sumurun" and "L'Enfant Prodigue" should have been spell-breakers, but somehow the incantation has managed to reimpose its stranglehold on the drama, perhaps because playwriting is exclusively in the hands of literary men rather than in the hands of men of the theatre, and the new type of dramatist—the dance-dramatist—has yet to appear. These two pieces, like the early ballets of Fokine, by their immense success, proved the power of the neglected dramatic medium, but that success was not due by any means to their perfection. They were all, by their very nature, but experiments, and, like all experiments, they were encrusted with faults. They were great achievements, but they were experiments and tentative efforts in the development of a new sphere of dramatic art, and as such were demonstrably imperfect in conception, in dramatic construction, and in the building up of effect. Yet withal the astounding success that attended them they perished without offspring. They

have had no successors, no one has perceived their true significance, they have been taken as examples of brilliant opportunism rather than as the forerunners of a new development of dramatic art, and no one has had the insight and initiative to carry on the work to fruition. Like the mule, they were regarded as a cross-breed, a monstrous if excellent mixture of drama and dancing, and, as such, sterile and unable to propagate their own species. "Sumurun" and "L'Enfant Prodigue" lived brilliantly and died without issue, and Fokine, after producing "Scherharazade," "Thamar," and "L'Oiseau de Feu," succumbed to the degeneration of the Russian ballet and fell, with it, to the purveyance of spectacular drivel that has no longer contact with life nor with that which is vital in the human soul, and which supplies the wealthiest and most ignorant section of the community with digestive assistance that does not demand that dreaded activity of the cells of the brain which register either emotion or thought. It is true that Sir James Barrie gave us not only "Pantaloone," but also a little piece called "The Truth About the Russian Ballet," but the hopes that he may have aroused were not justified, and his admirable combination of speech and movement must be considered as a welcome work of opportunism rather than as a conscious attempt to extend the boundaries of dramatic art. But we owe him a debt of gratitude nevertheless, for he has demonstrated, once more with popular success, that the welding in one play of the two media of speech and movement can be not only possible but wholly admirable and satisfactory. So that in this the boundary-marks of the domain of dramatic art have been yet again unintentionally extended, for while "L'Enfant Prodigue" was Mime only, "Sumurun" Mime flecked with Dancing, Fokine's ballets Dancing flecked with Mime, Sir James Barrie's little piece demonstrated the welding together of the three factors, Speech, Mime and Dance, in one play.

VI.

Dancing.

Nearly a decade ago, while I was engaged in thinking about the possibilities of dramatic expression and seeking to gain a clearer comprehension of the problems involved, these facts were for the first time borne in upon me. I had, already long ago, seen "*L'Enfant Prodigue*," and, in common with everyone else, while sharing the general surprise and enjoyment I had failed to appreciate the true significance of the production. It was only when I came to concern myself with dancing that I began to see clearly the nature of the obstructions that were blocking the way to a fuller development of dramatic art. Dancing was, and still is, in a bad way in England, indeed everywhere, but most of all in England. This fact needed explanation, for dancing is a natural pastime and means of self-expression among all races and in all climates. Amateur dancing is divorced utterly from professional dancing. The popular dancing of individuals for their own pleasure is a thing altogether apart from the theatrical presentation of dancing as an art. The two techniques have drifted so far apart that not only has the ballroom dancer neither interest in, nor understanding of, stage dancing, but the theatrical dancer is usually incompetent in the ballroom. This is certainly not a healthy situation. When an art loses touch with life, with the common human impulses from which it sprang, it is surely on its way to perdition. And the condition of theatrical dancing at present is as suggestive of perdition as the condition of popular dancing is suggestive of virility. It must be said in passing that popular dancing has drifted into a blind alley, from which it will be lucky if it succeeds in emerging alive, for it has

rambled into the rut of a lifeless technique that must soon weary the spirit of the most exuberant generation. For the present, however, while that technique is still young, it is in a most flourishing and healthy condition.

On the other hand, the technique of stage-dancing is neither young nor healthy nor yet flourishing. It is so old and oppressed with years that its joints creak with every movement, and it flourishes so faintly that it exists only on sufferance, and largely in dependence on the sexual appeal of its exponents. The production of ballet in England has ceased entirely, save it be reproduced for tradition's sake in a pantomime, in an opera, or introduced by a foreign star. Yet the impulse of dancing as an art and as a means of artistic self-expression is as insistent as it can ever have been at any period of the world's history, for the schools in the metropolis and in the provinces are legion and are crowded with students for none of whom is there the prospect of any reasonable career. The public, however, general or intellectual, will have none of it any longer, and the controllers of the theatres, popular or artistic, will not countenance it at all. A more invidious and unhealthy situation could scarcely be imagined than this, where the supply is plentiful and insistent and the demand nil save in its own self-generated circle of technical devotees.

The Russian Ballet.

The Russian ballet still has a vogue, however, for the very wealthy patronise it freely and employ it regularly to assist them in the processes of digestion, stipulating only that in return they shall not be required to think or feel anything, but be allowed just to sit very still with half-closed eyes and be dimly conscious of a kaleidoscope of pretty harmoniously-moving colours and pleasing musical vibrations. It has also a following of a certain type of degenerate artist, and a sprinkling of vital and intelligent admirers who recognise in it isolated qualities of greatness such as the superlative

technical attainment of its dancers, individually and in mass movement, and in some of the musical and pictorial material which it employs. But of serious dramatic quality it has nothing whatever, and as a factor in the development of the art of the theatre it is as dead as the *Commedia dell'Arte*. Its ballets are meaningless and without form or coherence, it has lost touch altogether alike with reality and with dramatic art, and its standard of production looked at from the standpoint of contemporary culture can only be described as belonging properly to the nursery. Whether we dismiss it in the terms of a distinguished dramatic critic such as Mr. St. John Irvine, who described it in the pages of the *Observer* as "the dreary, ugly and nauseous Russian ballet," or seek to tolerate it on account of the great technical attainment of its performers, it now exists only as a commercial enterprise for public amusement, much as a boxing-match, a revue, a pantomime, or a jamboree. As it stands to-day it is a significant and striking object, however, like a ruined castle on a hill. In it is the most highly-trained and technically efficient body of dancers that Europe has, probably, ever known; it is a nucleus round which pictorial and musical artists who have in them a feeling for the theatre, tend to cluster like moths round a candle, yet its potentialities instead of being seized by a genius and turned into the channels of dramatic expression are being frittered away on the superficial and trivial inventions of freak artists without vision or sense of reality.

Their ballets, accomplished as is the technique of the dancers, admirable as is the artistic co-ordination of the whole production, adroit as is the choreography, do not express an emotion or an idea that is true, vital, illuminating, moving or sincere. They do not inspire, they do not reveal, they do not move, they do not excite anything save technical admiration, surprise, or a superficial sense of the beautiful. Art to be great must express something of greatness; it must profoundly

move. But the Russian ballets are not real. They are a sham, a masterly, artificial sham. They do not satisfy. Their dramas are not truly dramatic, their comedies do not excite real laughter, their spectacles carry no meaning, their tragedies call forth no tears. Great art must make men laugh, great art must make men shudder, thrill and think, great art must make men weep. Great art reveals.

Art and Expression.

Since the dancers are superlatively efficient, as in the Russian ballet, or enthusiastic and hard working, as in the English dancing schools, the fault lies not in their direction, but must be sought in two other factors that should form the basis of satisfactory ballet. Either the technique that is employed is itself inadequate and out of touch with reality, or else that technique is not being applied in the requisite manner for success. We have seen already that the latter is the case, and we will discuss presently the probability that the former is so also.

The essence, we have agreed, of dramatic art is the expression of emotion and idea in their relation to the conflicts and aspirations of human beings, and the revelation, by means of speech or movement, of the vital and moving factors in human life. Dancing is concerned with the medium of movement only, but it is being applied at present, both in the Russian ballet and everywhere else, to the expression of nothing whatever. In the great early ballets of Fokine this was not so, and it was this temporary attainment of reality that constituted their greatness and their success. For a time these blind and struggling artists (for artists are rarely thinkers, and still more rarely conscious of the direction of their own impulses) struck the great highway and journeyed along the road of the development of dramatic art; then, by some false impulse on the part of the directing intelligences concerned, they left the reality that they had found and drifted aimlessly

into an abyss of opportunism, triviality and absurdity from which they appear unable to find an outlet. Go where you will to-day, it is rarely that you will find dancing, whether it be a solo-dance or a ballet, that is concerned with the expression of anything that is real or vital. The basis of artistic expression has been lost sight of, and the most that is attempted or achieved is the interpretation in movement of the rhythms of musical composition, or the chance expression of the mood of an individual dancer of powerful personality. I would not seem to underrate these two factors; indeed, they constitute a great part of the domain of dancing-as-an-art, the limits of which I would not confine but expand; but though they can exist as isolated items in the art they are properly but an incidental part of the practice of the art as a whole. They are as the recitation of a stray verse of a poem, of little significance in themselves and properly incorporated in a larger endeavour. But beyond them there is nothing to-day save endless exhibitions of technical accomplishment, which for themselves are in the domain not of art but of musical acrobatics. R303073

As I have said, the dancers themselves are not altogether to blame, for it is not the province of interpretative artists to design the subject-matter of their art. Neither are actors required to write their plays, nor executive musicians to compose the works that they interpret. I do not know whether there is any physiological basis for the old saying that a dancer's brains find their way to his feet, but it would not be surprising if the contention were ever proved, for the dancing community as a whole does not appear to be remarkable for intelligence. Other factors, however, may be responsible for this, and it must be remembered that the subject of their work is not intellectual, like that of the actor, but emotional, if not merely technical. I do not think that such a state of degeneration could ever have come upon the art if there had been men and women of intellectual power in its service; but whatever force

this minor contention may have, the basic fault lies without the profession.

The Dance-Dramatist.

It is as monstrous that there should be no class of trained creative artists in the art of dancing as it would be were there no dramatic authors in the art of dramaturgy, or, for that matter, no composers in the world of music. There was indeed a time when actors and actresses had to devise their own plays, and it occurred during the later stages of the decay of the Roman Empire and again during the Middle-ages. The result was the famous "Commedia dell'Arte," and the end of that was precisely what we behold to-day in the realm of ballet. In the modern degradation of dancing the function of the supreme designer, call him author, composer, or what you will, is performed, in so far as it can be said to be performed at all, by the chosen individual who "puts the dance up." This individual is actually merely the producer. The producer is perhaps the most important person inside a theatre; he should be supreme there, but the functions of the dramatist are not only outside his sphere but are even incompatible with the very nature of his particular ability. The director of the whole concern, the composer of the music, even the scenic designer, may have a say in the matter, but their interference, single or combined, renders the process still more ludicrous than it must inevitably be. Until this state of affairs is realised in its true perspective and remedied nothing can be done in this essential direction, and it may well be thought that it will be no easy matter to entice into this muddled and degenerate art-form creative artists of dramatic ability and genius.

The Organisation of Dance-Drama.

Before a permanent renaissance of dancing can come into being the art must achieve a reorganisation along the lines upon which all the art of the theatre has been

able to evolve. There must be brought into it the creative architect, the intellectual equal of the dramatist, the composer, and the designer, the ultimate originator of the form and subject of the work—whether it be a short solo-dance or a three-hour ballet. The dance-dramatist, having conceived and worked out in full detail his composition, setting forth with the utmost elaboration and lucidity every shade of emotion and every facet of idea that the subject requires shall be expressed, essentially as in a play save that the form of setting down is not dialogue, there will result a balanced and efficient framework of subject-matter in which the effect is built up cumulatively by a trained and expert artist whose business in life it is. This alone will place the art upon a new plane, because hitherto its most fortunate efforts have been counteracted by the amateurish and incompetent manner in which the subject-matter has been conceived and built up to its climaxes, a basically faulty construction that no play could survive through rehearsal. The text will then go to the musical composer for interpretation in music when this is required—for indeed the expanded limits of dramatic art will have a wide field for dance-expression that has no music. His hand will not be left so free as it has been in the past, for he is but one of several artists concerned, all of whom will be required to subject their personality to the requirements of the subjects they are given to interpret. The designer will then be called in to devise the scenic interpretation, his work, like that of the musician, being confined to the intensification of the emotions and ideas that are set down for expression in the text. The producer then has his full material, and the rest of the production shall be in his sole hands, and shall proceed unquestioned according to his judgment. Using his dancers as medium, he shall carry out the design of the dance-dramatist, working out the evolution and development of the subject, and interpreting in movement the ideas and emotions which arise from it in the most terse and vital

manner of which he is capable. The dancers, in their turn, denied all technical excrescence and *tours-de-force*, all irrelevant exhibition of personal accomplishment, will be required, like actors and actresses, to subject their personalities and bend their abilities exclusively to the interpretation of the piece as a whole according to the skilled design of the dance dramatist. Thus a reorganised and disciplined branch of dramatic art may once more be able to achieve ascendancy in the renascent art of the theatre.

Jean Georges Noverre.

The present degeneracy of dancing as an art is no recent decline that can be traced to Victorian conditions or to the rise of industrialism or any of the causes that are generally cited. Indeed, it would appear to have commenced as long ago as the middle of the seventeenth century. At that time there lived the greatest thinker that has ever concerned himself with the art of dancing, a man whose intellectual stature dwarfs the famous and admirable Carlo Blassis who designed ballets and controlled the dancing of Europe in the early nineteenth century. Blassis, in his excellent book *The Code of Terpsichore*, gives us a lucid picture of conditions in his time, of his own aims and ambitions and conception of the function of dancing as an art. Artificial as conditions were in the theatre of his time, and typically artificial as were the subjects of the ballets he designed, they were no more so than the rest of the dramatic art of his day, and were still firmly in the path of genuine dramatic evolution. But his greater predecessor, Jean Georges Noverre, also the supreme figure in the dancing world of his day, has left us in his book, *Lettres sur la Danse et sur les Ballets*, a superb statement of the principles which must govern dancing if it is to maintain its position in the art of the theatre, showing that even in his day it must have been showing signs of falling into decay and following false principles.

Mr. Mark Perugini in his book *The Art of Ballet*, speaking of this remarkable man, says:

"Noverre visioned to himself a theatre devoted to a kind of ballet as different from that he saw in Paris. . . . A ballet that should be informed by a technique so perfect as to be unobtrusive, and combining the arts of dance, pantomime, music and poesy, into a new, subtle, resourceful and comprehensive means of artistic expression.

"He wanted to see swept away all the mechanical rules of ballet composition, the stereotyped and unimaginative story, the conventional arrangement of stage groups, the stilted 'heroic' style of the dancers, the formal sequence of their entreés. . . . He wanted to infuse a new spirit of art and efficiency into what he found about him and—he had to go elsewhere."

To quote Noverre himself :

"Ballets have hitherto been the faint sketch only of what they might one day be. . . . History, painting, mythology, poetry, all combine to raise it from that obscurity in which it lies buried; and it is truly surprising that composers have hitherto disdained so many valuable resources. . . . If ballets are for the most part uninteresting and uniformly dull, if they fail in their characteristic *expression* which constitutes their very essence, the effect does not originate from the art itself but should be ascribed to the artists. . . . We daily see the generality of composers sacrifice the beauties of the dance and forego the graceful naïveté of sentiment to become servile copyists of a certain number of figures known and hackneyed for a century or more. . . . It is uncommon and next to impossible now to find invention in ballets. . . .

"Ballet-masters should consult the productions of the most eminent painters. This would bring them nearer to Nature and induce them to avoid as often as possible that symmetry of figures which by repeating the object, presents two separate pictures of one and the same canvas.

"Ballets . . . ought to unite the various parts of the drama. Most of the subjects, adapted to the dancer, are devoid of sense, and exhibit only a confused jumble of scenes, equally unmeaning and unconnected. . . . The historical part of the ballet must have its exposition, its incidents, its dénouement."

But, above all, this :

"Every ballet, complicated and extensive in its subject, which does not point out, with clearness and perspicuity,

the action it is intended to represent, the intrigue of which is unintelligible, without a programme or printed explanation; a ballet, in fine, whose plan is not felt, and appears deficient in point of exposition, incident, and dénouement; such a ballet, I say, will never rise, in my opinion, above a mere divertissement of dancing, more or less commendable from the manner in which it is performed. But it cannot affect me much, since it bears no particular character, and is devoid of expression.

"It may be objected that dancing is now in so improved a state that it may please, nay, enchant without the accessory ornaments of expression and sentiment. . . . I readily acknowledge that, as to mechanical execution, the art has attained the highest degree of perfection: I shall even confess that it sometimes is graceful: but gracefulness is but a small portion of the qualities it requires.

"What I call the mechanical parts of dancing are the steps linked to each other with ease and brilliancy, the aplomb, steadiness, activity, liveliness, and a well-directed opposition between the arms and legs. When all these parts are managed without genius, when the latter does not direct these different motions, and animate them by the fire of sentiment and expression: I feel neither emotion nor concern. The dexterity of the dancer obtains my applause; I admire the automaton, but I experience no further sensation. It has upon me the same effect, as the most beautiful line, whose words are uncouthly set asunder, producing sound, not sense. . . . Let the man of genius put the letters together, form the words, and from these produce regular sentences; the art shall no longer be mute, but speak with true energy, and the ballets will share with the best dramatic pieces the peculiar advantage of exciting the tenderest feelings; nay, of receiving the tribute of a tear. . . . Dancing thus ennobled by the expression of sentiment, and under the direction of a man of true genius, will, in time, obtain the praises which the enlightened world bestows on poetry and painting, and become entitled to the rewards with which the latter are daily honoured."

These are the words of perhaps the greatest authority on dancing that ever lived. That I have taken upon myself to re-express his ideas in this century, re-express them so identically, is because they apply equally to this century, and I had already written them before I had read a word of Noverre or knew the significance of his name.

Technique.

Justifiably to condemn a technique that has evolved naturally throughout the centuries of this particular phase of civilisation requires a knowledge and conviction that few are likely to possess. I am not inclined to take upon myself this responsibility. Such a task, however, has been undertaken long since in other arts such as painting and music. Also it may be said with some certainty that because a technique has so evolved is in no sense a guarantee that it is the best possible technique. Indeed, every race has a technique of its own, and the painting of China and Japan differ from our own as profoundly as the dancing technique of those countries to-day or that of Egypt and Greece in the past differ from that which we are discussing. Long ago dancers, sickened by the paralysing conventions of the academic technique, cut themselves adrift, and sought to re-create the system of the Greeks. Probably this pseudo-classical school was as futile as an effort to introduce into modern Europe the dancing conventions of Java or Japan, for indeed every people must evolve its own system of art-expression, but that is not to say that Europe might not learn greatly from these systems, nor that the achievement of a fuller and more perfect technique might not depend on the incorporation of many principles derived from these peoples of the past and the present. At any rate we can say without hesitation that those dancers who maintain that the academic technique is perfect, essential and unalterable, are quite certainly wrong, for technique, like other things, must evolve with the changing generations and find new forms to satisfy ideas that have developed with the centuries. But the academic technique has remained stationary; it is essentially to-day as it was in the time of Noverre, and its inadequacy for to-day is demonstrated by the futility of its efforts at expression. In fact, as it stands, the academic technique, capable of interpreting the ideas of the ballet of two centuries ago, is definitely incapable

of interpreting the ideas of the ballet of to-day—as that ballet could and should be. Consequently we still have the ballet of two centuries ago, or at most a modern equivalent of it, and it does not mean anything to us. It has fallen behind the times, remained in a rut of past ages, and has not continued to evolve shoulder-to-shoulder with the other arts. That in short is why dancing is the poor uninspiring thing that we find it, and why, though it retains many charming and pleasing qualities, it is not a significant and vital artistic force in the art-world of to-day.

It is not my intention to examine the academic technique in detail. This necessary and valuable undertaking would be out of proportion to this very general discussion of the art of the theatre. But one very simple and obvious movement may be taken by way of illustration. The use of the *point*—that is the balancing of the body on the tips of the toes of the dancer—is a brilliant and valuable achievement of the ancient technique. It is not a natural movement, but it is a movement that the human body may strive after, may seek for the expression of certain emotions, and as a point of technique in the art of movement it is certainly indispensable. No technique, such as the Greek, that lacked it, could be adequate or entitled to claim the position of full evolution that is necessary for the modern art of the theatre. It is the logical and perfect culmination of certain aerial movements, movements of extreme lightness and delicacy, movements that demand a straining on high. But its use beyond these limits is entirely unwarrantable and absurd. Such abuse detracts from the value of its legitimate use, and a technique which for the sake of its difficulty and spectacular effect makes use of the *point* as a mere technicality, to be used irrespective of its applicability to the emotional expression of the dance, is a bad technique. To walk, run, or dance on the *point* is not art but acrobatics. Yet the whole of modern academic dancing is fraught with this absurdity. As

with the *point* so with a dozen other movements; the academic technique has run to seed, it has lost touch with life and reality so utterly that dances are no longer anything but technical exhibitions applied to some musical composition. So long as this state of affairs remains there can be no hope of dancing regaining a place among the serious arts or of its having any significance for the cultured and thoughtful community.

That dancing such as this should exist and flourish among its own technical devotees is no doubt a good thing, but in this connection, and in its connection with purely musical interpretation, I am not further concerned with it here. It is only as a branch of the art of the theatre, as a potent means of dramatic expression that it enters into the scope of this work; and as such, whatever degree of basic soundness the academic technique may have, dancing must evolve a fuller, freer, and more natural system of expression before it can achieve its highest dramatic possibilities.

Health and Technique.

In another direction altogether there is a body of evidence highly adverse to the academic technique. Whereas the devotees of the Greek dance achieve by the practise of their art a remarkable physical culture and a high degree of bodily health—to such an extent that a large percentage of their pupils undertake the training for hygienic reasons only—the practice of academic dancing results in an unhealthy physical condition. This again is a subject which demands detailed investigation, which it cannot be given here, but it may be stated as a matter of common knowledge and casual observation that in spite of the physical exercise and muscular development, which must have a healthful tendency, academic dancers in general are chronically ill and tortured with rheumatism in their joints. Doubtless this is the price they have to pay for the unnatural movements they are obliged to perform. The tendency of evolution has never lain towards

the use of the tips of the toes for the purposes for which the sole of the foot was intended, nor towards a means of progression in which the hips, knees and feet are splayed outwards so that instead of the feet being parallel they lie at an angle of 150 degrees to one another. Why so ugly and unnatural a movement should have become a fundamental factor in the European dancing-technique I am not able to understand, but it may be stated with reasonable certainty that this, and divers other contortions based upon it, practised assiduously for years, is the cause of the widespread ill-health of the professional dancer. Another very noticeable feature of the physical development accompanying the practise of the academic technique is the unevenness of the muscular culture obtained. One wonders what the dancers of antiquity, Greek or Egyptian, would have thought of the duck-like waddle and kindred unnatural movements of the dancer of to-day, but still more what he would have thought of the herculean thighs and iron-muscled legs compared to the puny arms above them, arms that have no greater muscular development than those of a child. We who are used to these things, who have been brought up to take for granted these grotesque movements and the incongruity between the top and bottom of a dancer, are not greatly affected by it, but the absurdity of these things is none the less real, they are none the less wrong, and it certainly behoves us to clear the preconceptions from our vision, see these things freshly as they really are, and rebuild bad structures into a more perfect technique.

In truth it is likely that all these grotesque features belong to one group of iniquitous artistic monstrosities that has grown up in our civilisation. The basis of this group is what is called grand opera. Artistically and as a branch of the Art of the Theatre it is a bastard form of art, and everything connected with it partakes of its own unreal character. Academic dancing is more commonly called operatic dancing, and it is characteristic and belongs essentially to that school of bastard art.

Grand opera supplies a need which a section of the community experiences, and it is likely to continue to supply that need, and operatic dancing with it, but it is surely time that the rest of the community, those whose vision is fresh and uninfluenced by preconceptions and whose artistic susceptibilities are too acute to become reconciled to the gaucheries involved, should be given a genuine technique that shall form part of the composite Art of the Theatre.

VII.

Environment.

The Use of Luminous Screens as Stage Setting.

In discussing the literary drama I made it clear that Words were no longer the exclusive medium of expression in the Art of the Theatre, but that Movement and Environment were factors that should play a much more extensive part than heretofore in the performance of a theatrical work. Movement in this connection I discussed in some detail, but the possibilities of Environment were left unexamined.

In a previous publication called *Cuchulainn* I outlined a system of stage décor, and illustrated each scene with a half-tone plate from photographs of a theatrical model. This system, called the *Hollow-Box System*, consists of a series of light framework cases, conveniently though incorrectly called cubes, and drums or cylinders, of several sizes. With this equipment, the cubes painted pale blue-grey, the cylinders dark grey or terra-cotta, and a semi-circular white Hasait cloth or Fortuny dome, scenes of an architectural character can be built up in an almost inexhaustible variety of forms, also in an efficient convention for natural formations, such as mountains and forests, lit and coloured exclusively with coloured light. This equipment lacks only arches, which can be added if they are considered necessary for the expression of any particular play.

This system commences by severing direct connection with Realism, yet it can be made conventionally Representational or purely Expressionist as may be required. The interior of a room, of any general period, can be erected in this way, or the exterior of any building, but the essential feature of the system is that it can be

applied to a complete plastic interpretation of the play which is being performed within it. These cubes and cylinders can be built up into vast towering architectural forms expressive of the atmosphere of the piece, and lit by beams of coloured light playing upon them and altering with each passing phase of the action and each varying emotional condition of the actor or actors with whom they are associated or in whose immediate neighbourhood they are. Unfortunately the conditions of present-day book-production did not admit of these scenes being reproduced in colour, therefore, in *Cuchulainn*, they illustrate but half their function and merely reveal a series of architectural forms, quasi-realistic, the colour-values being rendered only by light and shade.

Recently, however, I have been experimenting with another system of stage décor, one which is still more vital to the needs of a nascent Art of the Theatre, one which places in the producer's hands an instrument of still greater efficiency for the utilisation of Mass and Coloured Light as mediums of expression. In this system the severance from Realism is complete. It is not possible, using these principles, to represent any object of reality, such as a house or a mountain, upon the stage of a theatre, save in the essential qualities which such objects leave upon the mind in the form of an impression. That is to say, according to this system, if the scene is the interior of a building the setting, examined in detail, bears no recognisable resemblance to any building, but nevertheless conveys to the mind of the beholder, in an intensified form, the general impression which such a building would create.

This system consists in the use of luminous screens of sizes varying from 6 feet to 18 feet or more, according to the relative stage dimensions. These screens can be set in a great variety of ways so as to form combinations of mass capable of giving expression to almost any emotion. Lit from behind with coloured light

that alters with every mood and emotional reaction, they form a most potent medium of expression for any non-literary play. Shakespearean production could be carried out to advantage with them also, for the literary quality of the Renaissance drama is but the outward form of its true dramatic quality which would find valuable emphasis in such production.

From the illustrations of the pieces that follow in this book it will be possible in some degree to gauge the power of this device, at any rate as regards the element of Mass, for each is drawn from an actual photograph, and if it should prove possible to reproduce one or two in colour the power of Colour as a medium of expression applied to this built-up Mass will be perceptible also.

By way of illustration of the principles employed take No. III. This represents Scene 2 of *The Poisoned Kiss*. This scene, as the reader will discover, seems relatively unimportant and uneventful and makes an uninteresting piece of reading. Actually, however, this is hardly the case, for in production it should assume considerable importance and prove as vital and significant as any scene in the book. Indeed it is an excellent example of the difficulty to which I have referred already in discussing the literary form of theatrical work of this nature (*Experiments in the Art of the Theatre*), that outside the spoken word, that is apart from the verbal medium of expression, it is almost impossible to register the Art of the Theatre in a manner that is adequate as literature. It can, in fact, only be registered pictorially. In this scene we see for the first time the vague and terrible figure of the Saxon Earl. Actually he is never clearly seen, and here he is little more than a voice and plastic mass. Monumentally enthroned in a darkened niche, with ascending tiers of vaguely luminous screens leading the eye up to his altitude, surrounded by an ominous crimson glow, we behold him in an atmosphere absolutely expressive of the spirit and personality of this dire and

sinister being. Herded before his throne, the wretched Danish prisoners drag themselves, manacled and chained, into a blue nothingness, a sinister green light falling upon their bowed backs. Expressed in this manner this little scene, so flat in the reading, becomes vivid and full of dramatic power.

Or take No. X., the last scene of *The Tremendous Lover*, where the self-slaughtered Deirdre is borne in to be laid on the bier beside her lover Naoise while the old broken king looks on and tastes the bitterness of the ruin he has brought on so many of his people. The bier, sombre and shrouded in the purple glow of death, stands before its dimly glowing background of screens heaped up in ponderous and sinister immensity, while the frail corpse is borne in by black hooded figures along a wall of moonlit surfaces ascending majestically towards the centre of the building, while the crimson glow of burning Emain is reflected in the distant sky beyond.

Or take, again, the scene where Deirdre and Naoise consummate their love 'among the moonlit hills of Skye (No. IX.). Here the spirit of the scene is different indeed. No threatening blood-red atmosphere is here, but one of peace and love, of joy and the supreme fulfilment of the heart's desire. Pale blue and moonlight-green glow softly in the towering protecting edifice of screens in whose shadow the lovers stand, their souls filled with the wonder and mystery of what they are about to do, the peace and soaring joy of their minds symbolised in the light-filled structure rising sheerly into the moonlit sky.

PART II.

I.

Experiments in the Art of the Theatre.

I have often been told that the general public does not read plays. That is clearly its own fault, for people who write them usually publish them as fast as ever they can. They do that because theatre managers don't produce plays unless they are remarkably lacking in profundity, and nobody writes a play of that sort who can write a better one, not because he is unwilling to do so, but because, poor devil, he can't. However bad his plays may be they are bad of the higher sort, and there is no likelihood of their badness bringing them within the range of popularity. The only hope of such a dramatist is in writing the greatest play of which his mentality is capable. There may be little hope of commercial success, however high his achievement, but the publishing of his plays will bring him such appreciation as may be his due from those who are qualified to estimate his worth.

But what exactly is a published play? Do you know? Is it really a form of literature, something rather like a novel in dialogue? I think a printed play is a complex occurrence witnessed on a mental stage and, in order that it may not be forgotten and may even be rendered communicable to other persons, registered by means of such symbols as are most universally understood in that connection.

The result of this process bears no greater resemblance to that which was originally witnessed than the score of a ballet-number does to the performance of it. When, however, the so-registered play is put into the hands of a professional producer who attempts to re-create it on a physical stage it will have to undergo still further modifications. The technical difficulties and physical obstacles which have to be overcome modify it no less than the devices which have to be employed in order to

render its effect as potent as possible on the audience who attend its performance.

For instance, the basic features of a play are seldom referred to in the spoken words. They lie in the structure of the piece, and therefore the mere declamation of the lines will not adequately reveal the play's meaning. Suppose the basic feature in question be the majestic and awe-inspiring quality of some royal figure. In the words he is given to speak this could not possibly be described, but it may be, nevertheless, one of the vital factors of the drama. In the spoken words this quality is revealed somewhat in the phraseology and the cadence of the sentences, but otherwise it is buried in the structure of the play. In production, however, the actor can be enabled to emphasise it in his diction and in his movements, it can be further stressed by the position accorded the actor on the available space and in relation to his fellows, it can be rendered obvious by the architecture of the scene in which the figure is placed, the objects he holds and the garments he wears. In such a case the figure in question would be placed upon a throne, perhaps of exaggerated proportions, wearing heavy, flowing, rich and sombre-coloured robes, and being placed in a raised niche or in relation to towering columns so that the relative minuteness of the other mortals concerned should be rendered unconsciously obvious by the massive masonry among which they move. Moreover, such a figure can be revealed in a different light from that which plays upon his subjects, not by noticeable manipulation of light shafts, but by so ordering the illumination of his background and the space by which he is surrounded that his aloofness and separate mental processes are in some sort reflected in the atmosphere in which he is rendered visible.

Thus the producer has four major resources of dramatic art by means of which to reveal the basic features of the play:—

1. The elocutionary powers and ability in gesture and movement of the actor.

2. The positions accorded the actor in the available space in relation to those accorded his fellows.
3. The architecture of the scene, the clothing of the actor, and the construction of the properties connected with his part.
4. The lighting of the actor in relation to the moods to which he is giving expression.

None of these, however, can form part of the printed text; the available system of symbols for registering plays witnessed mentally provides no means by which these things can be incorporated, save by verbal reference, and verbal reference is to a lay-reader seeking mentally to re-create a play as destructive to the success of his task as a demonstration by the theatre staff of their methods of producing each effect would be to the progress of the public performance.

Therefore the plays that are the most successful in publication must assuredly be those that depend most on their sheer verbal composition, for this can be recorded, whereas the least successful must be those that depend most on the resources of the art of the theatre, which cannot be so registered in the text. But a play which depends for its success almost entirely on its verbal composition may be literature, but in so far as it does not give scope for the art of the theatre in so far as it is incompletely dramatic art.

Now, the plays which are collected in this volume are experiments in the art of the theatre, experiments extending over the total sum of years in which I have been interested in the theatre, and as such they are, for the most part, uncomfortable to read.

It is no easy matter, therefore, to select Dance-Dramas for publication. In the composition of such pieces there is no standard form, the art has no conventions and no technique, because it scarcely exists and has hardly ever been practised. In fact I had to evolve my own technique, and during a series of years I wrote some two dozen of these pieces gradually developing the form in which they were set down. But

it does not follow from this that the later ones are the best. Better to read they may be, but by no means necessarily better in production. And of all art forms this is essentially one that is intended for performance only, and that lends itself little to the perusal of any but a man or woman of the theatre, one who is technically interested in the art of expression by movement.

Accordingly I have come to the conclusion, with some reluctance—because some of the less literary pieces are considerably more dramatic and significant, and would unquestionably be more effective in performance—that I shall illustrate my thesis only with four pieces cast in a literary form, and two of the more readily readable of the others. Apart from a song in one and a chant in another, these four pieces have no words, and depend for expression entirely on mime and dancing, but the form is by no means to be confined in this manner. The limits of Dance-Drama commence with a play in which an attempt may be made to widen the scope of dramatic expression by substituting movement for words at certain moments—when an emotional situation becomes sufficiently intense and words cease to be an adequate medium wherewith to express the feelings, and there is suggested instead a reversion to primitive simplicity at such crises and that the emotions in question should be expressed by movement of the body alone. Such a piece is “The Eternal Rhythm.” Then there must come pieces that have words and movement in almost equal proportion as occasion may demand—that is, according as idea or emotion demands expression, the verbal being the medium adapted to the expression of ideas and the plastic to the expression of emotion. “The Poisoned Kiss” is an example of this experiment. Finally come the pieces in which words are eliminated entirely, as an example of the purest form of this branch of the art of the theatre. Although this is in a sense the antithesis of the literary form of drama, I have sought to devise for it a form which, I suggest, can perhaps be made into good literature.

The Eternal Rhythm.

The Eternal Rhythm.

This is a present-day Dance-Drama. At night-time under the starlit sky of the Great Desert a man and a woman are lying in the shade of a great sand-dune. The woman has been led here by a powerful instinct, for a crisis has arisen in her life. Her husband has developed her intellect with his own until she has become a very highly-developed being, and she now informs him that having raised her to his high level she has grown wings of her own and has surpassed him, growing greater than he, and finding a new and higher type of consciousness which he does not suspect. He sneers at her, and fails to understand, presently leaving her and returning to his tent. Alone, she lays open her soul to the magic of the desert, and gradually becomes overwhelmed by the Music of the Universe, the Eternal Rhythm which in her last stage of development she has just become great enough to perceive. The Eternal Rhythm takes possession of her, she feels the rhythms and harmonies of nature and of the stars in their courses, and is carried off her feet in her ecstasy, dancing in a frantic endeavour to get into harmony with it and attain this tremendous universal rhythm. Finally she succeeds, and falls down in a heap on the sand-dune in a state of trance. Presently a strange white-robed figure appears and speaks to her. She revives and converses with him. Eventually he persuades her that it is her duty to go with him towards the Golden Gateway, and as the first rays of the sun appear in dazzling brilliance he bids her come, pointing to the brilliant eastern sky and indicating the Golden Gateway whither he would lead her. Together they go towards the rising sun.

I shall be asked what it all means. I am not disposed to say. For one thing I wrote it first when I was much

younger, and I have forgotten years ago. I will say this much, however. I will suggest that in this world sometimes a soul which has achieved self-consciousness meets another soul, one which is unconscious, one whose personality still sleeps, and loves it. Gradually the self-conscious soul awakens the other and develops it until it reaches its own high level of development. But the newly-awakened soul does not stop here, and finally the once unconscious soul becomes greater than the one which developed it, and surpasses it. There is, perhaps, a strange sort of universal spiritual law about this, a sad, beautiful, tragic inevitability. It seems to be somehow connected with the design of things, it might even be traced to the complicated and intricate workings of the Eternal Rhythm itself. The soul which is now the greater eventually attains a higher sphere of consciousness. What shall we call it? The Buddhists called it Nirvana, perhaps the Christians call it the Kingdom of Heaven. Preaching a very different doctrine, a sterner, stronger, more intellectual system of values, and a more scientific mysticism, influenced probably by Nietzsche, I seem to have designated it simply by the phrase "The Golden Gateway." Details must afford their own explanation. According to the degree of insight of the reader will they reveal themselves. Perhaps the Man of the Desert will exercise the intelligence of the most penetrating. I hope so.

The curious subliminal emotional crisis which occurs in this piece where *The Woman* in a dance becomes conscious of, and attempts to achieve harmony with, the Rhythm of the Universe has been interpreted in music by Mr. Eugene Goossens in his symphonic poem called *The Eternal Rhythm*.

II.

The Eternal Rhythm.

A FANTASY.

The moon shines low over the countless sand-dunes of the Great Desert and gives the vast space the appearance of a rippling ocean. In the shadow of a huge dune a man and a woman are lying, scarcely discernible in the darkness.

THE MAN.

You have been dreaming all day, Navina; tell me your dreams.

THE WOMAN.

I came here to dream, Leonard. I came here to dream of the future, and the desert has placed before my eyes naught but recollections of the past.

THE MAN.

If you have the ashes of the past before your eyes the future will rise up from them unsought, like a phoenix from its burning death-nest. You have grown strange since we have been here.

THE WOMAN.

It was for that I came.

THE MAN.

I know. I hoped the desert would lull to rest the dreams and disquiet which have been smouldering in your eyes of late. But it has fanned them into flame. Will you not tell me of them?

THE WOMAN.

No, not yet. I have been thinking of the past, what a strange fiery-coloured thing it is. First, my girlhood in all its dullness and greyness; it was starvation of soul like everybody else's girlhood and boyhood. Then I met you. That was wonderful. I came to you poor and weak, trivial and petty, listless and lifeless, a timid little animal with large dull eyes begging to be fondled.

You took hold of me, because for some reason I appealed to you, and lo and behold, gradually I awakened. You were superb. I worshipped you dumbly, imitating you and striving to understand what you taught me consciously, and what I learnt from you by watching you. You treated me as a child at first, and it stung me. I observed and I learnt and I thought. Soon I understood more than you believed. I read your books and absorbed them into myself. I read you and absorbed you into myself. My soul awakened and I became conscious. My large, dull eyes seemed to become great burning globes of light, and soon I grappled with your subtlest emotions and thoughts. I remember the day when I first laid before you an elaborate idea of my own. You were strangely pleased and you actually made use of it. It slightly altered your consciousness. On that day I became no longer a child, but your equal, not really your equal, but a climber on the same peak of the mountain, a climber late in starting

THE MAN.

I remember the day. I shall always remember it. It was a day of triumph for me.

THE WOMAN.

Yes, it was. . . . I climbed swiftly from that day. I became your equal indeed, and now, now Leonard—listen, for I mean what I say—now I have become greater, yes, greater than you.

THE MAN.

You think you have, possibly you really have; but as I have told you, I consider your new ideas wild oats, the product of a mind run mad with success and self-gratification.

THE WOMAN.

What else could you think? That is what convinces me that I am now greater than you, for you can no longer breathe in my atmosphere.

THE MAN.

The intellect will never be able to breathe in that

atmosphere. The atmosphere you speak of is a return to religious ecstasy dressed in a different cloak.

THE WOMAN.

It is more intellectual than that, and yet I admit that the intellect seems to fly slowly and laboriously in that air, as though it were being dragged behind by something stronger and swifter than itself, instead of dragging that something behind it. . . . You first brought my intellect to life, made me understand the significance of Beauty, the significance of Art, and the significance of Life. My old ideas, which were only other people's ideas, gradually dropped off like old worn-out wings, as, hanging on to you, I soared with you in your flight through the universe; now I have grown wings of my own, and they take me to a new ether where I am no longer tortured by the terrible questions which scorch your mind night and day with their fire; here all is calm, and yet those questions are not merely thrown aside as unanswerable, they still live, though more clearly and more peacefully, perhaps more vividly too.

THE MAN.

My dear child, you speak as if I were a Philistine of the most pig-headed type. Half the world laughs at me for the loftiness of my ideas, and calls them useless and impracticable.

THE WOMAN.

Yes, that just proves the height of intellectuality which you have reached. Your intellect is a wonderful machine. It is like a very highly-bred race-horse. But I have seen on the horizon something which you have never seen, something which this intellect will hardly work upon, not because it is too thick and heavy and difficult for it, but because it is too thin and light and simple.

THE MAN.

That seems to me to render it hopeless to discuss. I spend my days now dreading lest you are about to be obsessed by that extraordinary cloud which, sometimes for no apparent reason, falls upon the minds of

quite brilliant people, and, inhibiting their perceptions and intellectual power, reduces them to a state of unhealthy religious ecstasy, in which state they are utterly inaccessible to reason. Surely you are not going to be a victim, Navina, you who are so strong. Fight against it, for mercy's sake. It would simply kill me to see you, the great work of my life, crumble in ashes at my feet.

THE WOMAN.

It is not that, Leonard. You know that religion in its ordinary form is as intellectually incredible to me now as ever it was to either of us.

THE MAN.

Well, fight it whatever it is, my beloved child. It is by our intellects alone that we are superior to the animals; our intellect is our one great treasure, and the means by which we excel one another; we have nothing else to rely on. Anything that inhibits that is a blight, and must be torn out. I am going back to the tent now, so that you may think about it alone. Good night, my dear one.

He gets up, and bending down, kisses her on the forehead. Then he goes away slowly, a black shadow against the grey mass of the sand-dune. The woman is quiet for some moments. Presently she rises to her feet and climbs up to the summit of the dune where she stands gazing dreamily away over the moonlit desert.

THE WOMAN.

Strange magic! There is something eternal about it something of fate and the great elemental forces. . . . It holds the Sphinx. . . . It is the natural home of the Sphinx. . . . Anywhere else he would be an absurdity, but here . . . here he is the natural personification of eternity. . . . I think there are forces at large here which do not penetrate into civilization . . . wild elemental forces . . . magic . . . things of the universe and the infinite . . . things we cannot conceive. . . . If one lived here long I think one would become strange, perhaps mad. . . .

I think one would lose all recollection, all memory, all interest in the present. . . . One would become an elemental thing. . . . One would tend to unite with nature, be absorbed by universal forces. . . . One would lose what one believes is one's individuality, but one would gain a greater individuality, a thing more wild and universal. . . . One would learn secrets of powers and beings our narrow life knows not. . . . One would probably die. . . . Few, I think, could stand the overpowering vastness of nature. . . . it would require supreme strength of spirit to resist being overwhelmed by the immensity of the universe around one. . . . I could not live here alone—for long; my spirit would be swept away into the void of eternity, lost among the stars. I suppose men who are born here can live alone—natives; but then they have not achieved self-consciousness, they are merely highly-evolved animals, perhaps that is why

She turns away suddenly as if to escape from her thought, and commences to walk up and down the hard surface of the dune from end to end. After a moment or two she speaks again.

THE WOMAN.

If once one lived here one could never leave it for long. . . . There is that in this solitude which chains the spirit. . . . It is like the Sphinx, the Sphinx is the personification of the desert. He chooses the weak he would slay at once. . . . The strong he would retain as his lovers until he killed them. . . . Unfaithfulness would be impossible . . . or would be rewarded by death. . . . The hypnotist! There would seem to be a vast quantity of some hypnotic substance lying in the ether of the desert. . . . He calls one. . . . He is ever summoning new lovers for his selection. . . . He is ever seeking new lovers to gratify his unslakeable passion. . . . It were dangerous to be here alone . . . this magic is strong . . . it is like wild music . . . it overpowers one (a pause, with a deep sigh). A colossal rhythm

seems perceptible in the vastness, the Rhythm of Eternity, the motive power of the universe, the movement to which the suns go on their courses, the music made by the whirling of the stars as they hurtle on their colossal course through the Infinite, the very rhythm of nature, of every living thing, of the mountains and the valleys, the budding and decaying of the trees and flowers, the years, the ages, the æons, the eternal course of everything in its eternal journey through Infinity. Everything moves, everything must move, and everything, to move eternally, must move harmoniously, rhythmically; therefore there is a rhythm in all things, in the seasons, in the days and nights, in the movement of the suns throughout the infinite universe. It must be this that constitutes the Eternal Rhythm by which all things exist, by which the universe maintains its balance and the order and inter-dependence of its bodies in space, the origin of all harmony, all beauty, all energy. The universe moves on chains of steel, and the Eternal Rhythm is the motive power which drives it on its eternal, inevitable, inexorable and unending circuit of æons. What a wonderful death the sun dies here every day! (*pointing to the brightening east*). And what a glorious resurrection! If man knew how to die in such magnificence we should need to drag through a useless old-age no longer. Death is an art in which man is strangely unskilled. Look at his conception of dying, struggle and blood, agony and slaughter, as though life were the unconscious, soulless existence of a tiger—that is his “glorious death.” Were it not better to come out here to die? To give one’s spirit to the ether of the desert, and one’s body to the clean soft sand? I think so.

Again she walks up and down once or twice with a feverish movement, placing her hands over her face. Then she pauses and stretches herself ecstatically, throwing off her cloak and taking a deep breath. Then she stands still, gazing at the sky,

her muscles taut, as though listening with all her might to something she cannot hear. Her thoughts become silent as a greater, vaguer thought comes upon her as a cloud, spreading silence around it as it approaches in all its glory. With this great silence in her mind she lays open all the gates of her soul to the influences of the moon and the stars, the night and the universe, and whatever hidden forces might approach her. The silent music of the universe extinguishes her thoughts as the sun renders powerless the light of a candle.

THE WOMAN.

Ah how cool and calm the moon is! he is sinking into the arms of the dawn. . . . (*the moon will soon disappear beneath the horizon, and the sky begins to pale before the swift dawn*). The night is so vast and enthralling. . . . the vague wonder and thrilling soul-flooding mystery of night and the vast vault of heaven. . . . Earth is wrapped in her winding-sheet of stars. . . . With almost orange glory the moon has buried his face in the sand The swift dawn sweeping away the stars that Infinity may be spotless for the advent of the sun. . . .

Gradually a terrific sensation floods her mind, carrying away all consciousness in its torrent. Her eyes burn in the night like fiery opals, and her body becomes more rigid. The sky seems to her to reverberate with an eternal melody, and the sand seems to sway to a terrific and soul-stirring chant. The moon pursues his luminous course accompanied by majestic music, and the stars become a roaring cascade of light. The night is filled with an all-pervading harmony, and the universe revolves to the colossal rhythm of the suns. The silence is transformed into vast music, and the music which fills the night to its profoundest depths and reverberates everywhere, so that there is naught in existence save music, is created by the roaring of the universe as it hurtles

on its eternal course through the Infinite. Slowly she relaxes her muscles, then she raises her arms gradually and throws back her head ; her muscles tighten once more—beautiful great muscles stretching themselves all over her body. Thus she remains in an attitude of ecstasy for some moments, listening to the eternal music, throbbing as though she were being charged by a magnetic current passing into her, a throbbing, whirring kind of tremor. Then things begin to change and move. She begins to perceive rhythms, harmonies, music in the night which enwraps her. The stars seem to disentangle themselves and to move in currents and eddies and whirlpools. Each group seems to move according to a different motion. Each group seems to give forth a different harmony. And, finally, each group seems to make a different rhythm. Everything seems to be whirling, swaying, hurtling, and in its motion to be giving forth a species of harmony. Then all these separate harmonies seem to combine and form the basis of a mighty complicated rhythm which she can barely perceive or comprehend, but just recognises as the outcome of the union of all these minor harmonies intermingling to form a perfectly balanced and most intoxicating rhythm.

THE WOMAN.

How vast is the universe! It pours into my soul some strange force It is everywhere, and it is overwhelming me a vast universal essence. . . . It is like wine. . . . It makes me feels so strange and excited, and mad. . . . I can think no longer. . . . I can remember no longer either. . . . I seem to be losing myself. . . . I feel so strange suddenly. . . . It is as if something had taken possession of me. . . . a terrific influx of strength of energy of ecstasy. . . . It is as though an arrow had entered my soul and lashed

it into furious activity. . . . I feel as if
 I were half mad The stars seem
 to be moving swaying swinging
 hurtling through the air all of them they
 make such a noise as they go on their course like
 the roaring of a great cascade and yet so musical
 full of such a frantic rhythm and the
 dunes they are singing too and swaying
 in time with the music of the stars the blazing,
 roaring cascade of stars. . . . Everything seems to be
 swaying, roaring all to the same vast music . . .
 tremendous music like like a colossal
 organ in Infinity. . . . It is deafening . . . bewildering
 and blinding. . . The ground beneath my
 feet seems to be moving now too . . . joining in this
 terrific movement. . . . Ah. . . . I feel so ecstatic
 so filled with this music in everything it
 has gone to my head like strong wine so uplifted
 beyond myself. . . . away away
 away off the ground in the air . . .
 among the stars. . . . and clouds and lights
 in the dawn. . . . Everything has joined in
 now. . . . The sound is deafening the move-
 ment is overpowering the rhythm is overwhelm-
 ing everywhere above me below
 me beneath me around me inside
 me in my body my bones . . . my
 limbs my brain my soul my whole
 being ah ah I can resist this
 rhythm no longer it has entered into me and
 overwhelmed me I must dance . . . besides,
 the ground is whirling beneath my feet it is
 forcing me to form part of this mad ecstasy . . . that is
 everywhere in everything Oh, the rhythm
 the music the eternal tremendous music
 the universal harmony . . . the Eternal Rhythm

*She has begun to sway—slowly, very slowly, just a
 quiver at first, then, as other muscles join in, a*

regular motion spreading all over her body. Muscle after muscle gives of itself and adds to the general harmony until her whole being sways—sways in an irresistible movement of rhythm. Swifter and swifter grows her swaying until her limbs begin to join in the feast of activity.

Gradually, majestically, she moves, stepping and swaying to the mysterious music. Swifter, ever swifter become her movements until every muscle in her body gives of its richest treasures. Her eyes blaze and her hair shimmers and glints with a glorious copper-coloured sheen.

Ever more vigorous and irresistible grow her movements until every particle of her being seems to hurl itself on the blazing pyre of the ecstasy to which she has laid open her soul. More clearly and more clearly still she perceives the universe whirling on its course, louder and louder can she hear its tremendous music resounding through the ether. Of nothing is she conscious save her uncontrollable effort to become in harmony with the movement of the universe. The ecstasy which fills her reaches to the profoundest depths of her being, and summons with inexorable authority every possession of her personality in the colossal effort to achieve this tremendous beauty, to become in harmony with this infinite music. Greater and greater she becomes, more beautiful and more beautiful still, as her whole being gives itself ever more and more completely to the beauty and rhythm which is resounding everywhere and pervading everything, until at last there seems to be nought left which it could give.

Then, when the tremendous beauty of this creature in whom there seems to be nothing which gives not of the utmost activity of which it is capable, becomes one with the Universal Harmony she gives a last ecstatic leap of activity, stumbles, seems to give way, stumbles again, and falls back

unconscious, a beautiful silver heap, shimmering in the moonbeams, bathed in the scintillating light of the stars, silhouetted against the growing brilliance of the Eastern dawn.

After some moments a figure appears on the dune opposite, a figure faint and pale as the dawn itself. The figure is of a man, tall and majestic, dark hair falling down his back from beneath a white cloth kept in position by a band round his forehead. He is robed in white, an unearthly spirit of the desert.

THE FIGURE, *in a dreamy voice.*

Why are you weeping?

THE WOMAN, *reviving under his gaze, but struggling for breath.*

What? Who is that?

THE FIGURE.

I am called the Man of the Desert.

THE WOMAN, *nervously.*

You I have often heard of you.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

Why are you weeping?

THE WOMAN.

I am not weeping.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

No? (*Vaguely*) I felt that someone was weeping in this part of my desert. Perhaps you are one of those who weep without tears, who weep when they understand something beautiful or great.

THE WOMAN.

Why did you think I was weeping?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

There are many people weeping in my desert. It is for that purpose that my desert exists. For those who are lonely; for those who are broken-hearted; for those who are overcome by the greatness of the spirit within them. I feel when they weep, and I come to them.

THE WOMAN, *slightly awe-struck by his majestic appearance.*

Who are you? Who were you?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *vaguely, in a calm melodious voice.*

Who? How should I know? I forget. Memory fades fast here. (*In a strangely expressionless voice*) I have no Past. I have no Future. I am an Eternal Present.

THE WOMAN.

Why . . . why did you come here? How did you come here?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

I have no recollection. Men come here for three reasons; because they have sinned; because they have suffered; because they have almost understood. You have almost understood.

THE WOMAN.

How do you know?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *calmly.*

I know everything.

THE WOMAN.

Everything! (*Suddenly*) Well, tell me . . .

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

It is for that purpose that I have come.

THE WOMAN. . . .

What is it that you wish to tell me?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *vaguely.*

I wish to tell you about the desert, about the sunset, about the sunrise, about the palm-trees, about the sand-dunes, about the stars, about the great duty, and about your soul.

THE WOMAN, *wonderingly.*

What do you know about my soul?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

Everything. That is the only thing about you that I do know.

THE WOMAN.

How do you know about my soul?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

I do not understand "How" and "Why." I merely know.

THE WOMAN *eagerly*.

What is it, then, that causes you to know?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *vaguely*.

A Great Power.

THE WOMAN, *in a stronger voice*.

You believe in God?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *absent-mindedly*.

God? God? (*A pause*). It is strange, but I have lost the significance of that word. I know the word. I know the word. But it conveys nothing to me, it represents nothing, it calls up no picture in my mind. (*In a simple, quiet voice*) There are many such words. They mean nothing here in the desert. The intellect lives only when it is constantly in touch with its fellows; out here it goes to sleep, and knowledge becomes a simpler thing. It is not arrived at by thought; it simply exists.

THE WOMAN.

What do you seek?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *vaguely*.

A spirit, a spirit.

THE WOMAN.

What spirit? Whose?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

Do spirits have names? Are they not merely themselves?

THE WOMAN.

I do not understand.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

No?

THE WOMAN.

You seek a spirit? What spirit?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

The spirit whom I created long ago.

THE WOMAN.

Where do you expect to find it?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *vaguely*.

I seek it everywhere.

THE WOMAN.

But why should it be here?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

Because it must be ready.

THE WOMAN.

How do you know?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

I created it. I created it. How should I not know?

THE WOMAN.

But why do you seek it?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

To lead it to the Golden Gateway.

THE WOMAN.

I do not understand you.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

No? (*More definitely*) I created a spirit in my soul, and fashioned its image in white marble. Then I came to seek for the Golden Gateway. The spirit I had created must have taken to itself flesh, but I knew it not. When it shall have realised itself completely it also will seek the Golden Gateway. I come to escort it down the Highway of Eternity.

THE WOMAN.

Realised itself?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

When it shall be capable of becoming in harmony with the Eternal Rhythm, of realising it, becoming part of it, expressing it, being it.

THE WOMAN.

I am that spirit.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

You are that spirit. Come.

THE WOMAN.

Come? Where to?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *raptly*.

Ah to the Golden Gateway to the Great Solitude to the last final state to

unite with the forces of eternity to become one with the spirit of the universe to form part of the Great Spirit, the Eternal Essence, to enter on your final inheritance, to have no longer a past, or a future to be an Eternal Present.

THE WOMAN, *suddenly*.

If you know everything tell me what I ought to do.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

You are one of those who have arrived at the final stage. You are understanding. Leave-takings are always bitter, and the future is uncertain. You fear to set out on your journey. You have passed through the great voyage of the intellect, and you are about to enter a higher consciousness. I have come to help you.

THE WOMAN.

And I have really grown greater than my husband?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

Your husband? I know him not. He must be of those in my desert whose presence I do not feel.

THE WOMAN.

I understand. And what should I do?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *hypnotising her with his voice, and speaking in a dreamy expressionless tone as though he were not listening either to what he says himself or to what she says.*

Those who become great must follow their greatness, their greatness.

THE WOMAN.

It is to my husband that I owe my greatness.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *as before.*

The great must become greater, ever greater.

THE WOMAN, *earnestly.*

He stooped and, raising me from nothingness, gave me his wings until I might grow wings of my own.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *as though he had not heard.*

There is a Beginning. There is an End. But there is no Middle. Those who would reach the Golden Gateway must not pause, must not pause.

THE WOMAN, *softly, almost to herself.*

I owe him my very soul. He is my creator.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *vaguely to the desert at large.*

Take heed, O ye creators! Are ye not creators that ye may be surpassed, be surpassed?

THE WOMAN.

He has given my soul birth. He has given it life. He has loved me, taught me, trusted me. . . . I have worshipped him.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *as before.*

Take heed, O ye that are worshipped! Are ye not worshipped that ye yourselves may know how to worship, how to worship?

THE WOMAN.

He gave up years of his life in order to make me as great as he.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

Take heed, O ye who would make men great! Shall ye not make men greater than yourselves, greater than yourselves?

THE WOMAN.

He is a supremely gifted being. He is of the greatest and most beautiful of the earth!

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

Take heed, O ye who are of the greatest and most beautiful of the earth! Are ye not of the greatest and most beautiful of the Earth that ye may make others greater and more beautiful still, greater and more beautiful still?

THE WOMAN.

He has been kind and loving and gentle to me. . . . He is a wonderful being. . . . But for him I should be nothing. . . . I love him.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *with deliberate and solemn utterance.*

Those who are weak—love. To those who are great there is only greatness, and greatness again. . .

THE WOMAN.

If I left him it would break his heart.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

His heart? What are hearts that they should not be broken? There are those who think they have only heads. To those it is the Great Awakening when their hearts are broken, are broken.

THE WOMAN.

Have I no duty to him?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

There is the One Supreme Duty, to become greater, to become ever greater.

THE WOMAN.

Have you no pity for him?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

Pity is for the weak. The great see only greatness, only greatness.

THE WOMAN.

And it is necessary that I should leave him?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

Nothing must hinder the rich in spirit from their duty. (*Vaguely.*) Blessed are the rich in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the Earth, of the Earth.

THE WOMAN.

It was through him that I became what I am; but for him I should be nothing. I am the life-work of a genius.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *as before.*

Take heed, O ye who are called genius! Have ye aught but a destiny to fulfil?

THE WOMAN, *desperately.*

I owe him all.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

The weak owe. The stupid owe. The unconscious owe. The lowly-minded owe. The Awakened, the Free Spirits, only behold the Golden Gateway.

THE WOMAN.

I I have many beautiful memories.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

That is the Past. The great heed not the Past.
There is only the Future, and again the Future.

THE WOMAN.

I fear to leave the past.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

You have arrived at the final stage. You are about
to enter a higher consciousness. You fear to set out.
The weak fear, and the ignorant. The Wise only
behold the Golden Gateway.

THE WOMAN.

I feel uncertain. The decision is too great. . . . I
do not think I could defy you. I do not think I could
contradict you. I beg of you to let me think. I
implore you to let me think.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

The weak beg, the weak implore, the weak think, the
great only behold the Golden Gateway. . . . Come
with me and you shall behold it, behold it.

THE WOMAN, *rising to her feet.*

I am strong enough? I am great enough? . . .
I am ready?

THE MAN OF THE DESERT.

It is your destiny. It is the privilege only of great
spirits to behold the Golden Gateway. Come. With
me you shall behold it. I, your creator, shall lead you.
(*Dreamily.*) Many have begged me to take them, to
take them. You are the first whom I have found who
is strong enough, who is ready.

THE WOMAN.

Now? (*faintly.*) My past my life . . .
my husband my

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *suddenly, as though waking
out of a reverie, masterfully stretching out his arms
and flashing his eyes on her.*

Come. . . . I know.

*She cannot resist. She obeys his summons. The
moon has sunk low and the swift dawn has*



NO. I.—THE ETERNAL RHYTHM

commenced. The sky is brilliant with the unique glory of a desert sunrise. The two figures are silhouetted against it. The first rays of the sun appear in dazzling brilliance.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT, *placing his arm round her shoulders, and pointing towards the sun.*

Behold! The Golden Gateway. Come.

They disappear down the far side of the great sand-dune.

The Poisoned Kiss.

III.

The Poisoned Kiss.

A DANCE-DRAMA OF ANGLO-SAXON DAYS.

NOTE.—This piece has in all four scenes. A method of producing it, using curtains only (as apart from the method with luminous screens by which it is illustrated), is as follows. The acting-area is completely surrounded by a semi-circle of curtains reaching from proscenium arch to proscenium arch. These curtains, luminous (lit from behind) or otherwise, are in three parts, one left, one right, one centre. Behind the centre curtain is a noble flight of steps. Behind the left curtain is a great window-recess approached by steps. Behind the right curtain is a towering throne, also approached by steps.

For the first scene the centre curtain is withdrawn, revealing the steps, up which the cortége goes. For the second scene the centre curtain is in place and the right curtain withdrawn, revealing the throne, and hanging in towering folds around and behind it. For the third scene the centre and right curtains are in place, and the left curtain is withdrawn to reveal the window-recess. For the fourth scene all the curtains are in place, or the steps may be partly revealed in order to provide a more dramatically powerful entry for Gormflaith.

A chamber in the castle of Hako, a powerful Danish Jarl, in the Danelagh, a couple of centuries before the Norman Conquest. The walls are bare save for a number of weapons hanging on them, and at one side the sacred raven standard of the Danes. On the table are a few objects, wrought silver candle-sticks, caskets, and a flagon of wine. In a corner of the room stands a huge wooden chest studded and banded with metal.

In the centre, on the table, a coffin is laid, and on the coffin an old white-bearded man, Jarl Hako, lies stretched out in death.

Round the bier at some distance moves a procession of mourners. In front are the two children of the dead Jarl, Sigrid, now Jarl in his father's place, and Gormflaith his sister. After them come the leading personages of their court. Thegns in armour, followed by their women, and finally the household attendants. The costume of the men, varying in texture and gorgeousness according to their rank, is a tunic of linen reaching to the knees, over which is a breast-plate and chain-armour, a long woollen or silken mantle hanging from the shoulder. Round their legs they wear bands of cloth or leather cross-gartered up to their knees, leather shoes or sandals on their feet, and on their heads plain metal helmets slightly pointed at the top, from beneath which flows their long dark hair. That of the women consists of a single robe reaching to the ankles, and caught in at the waist, over which hangs a mantle similar to that of the men. The more distinguished have many jewels, the humblest wear but one garment. Sigrid wears on his head a helmet with two towering metal spikes rising from the brow, and Gormflaith wears a jewelled coronet on hers.

Two harpers, squatting by the bier, play a funeral dirge to which the mourners sorrowfully dance as they mourn the dead Jarl with slow and rhythmic movements.

Presently the dirge comes to an end, and the procession halts. Jarl Sigrid raises his hands above his head.

SIGRID.

A curse upon Earl Edric!
The wicked Saxon Earl shall die!
The wicked Saxon Earl shall die!
The wicked Saxon Earl shall die!

GORMFLAITH, *repeating his words.*

A curse upon Earl Edric!
The wicked Saxon Earl shall die!
The wicked Saxon Earl shall die!
The wicked Saxon Earl shall die!

ALL THE MOURNERS.

A curse upon Earl Edric!
The wicked Saxon Earl shall die!
The wicked Saxon Earl shall die!
The wicked Saxon Earl shall die!

*Cursing thus with all the intensity at their command,
they continue their procession and do a curse
dance once round the chamber, coming to a stand-
still where they halted before. Again Sigrid
raises his hands and speaks.*

SIGRID.

By treachery he slew the good Jarl Hako!
By treachery he slew the Danish Jarl!
By treachery he slew the good old Jarl!

GORMFLAITH.

By treachery he slew the good Jarl Hako!
By treachery he slew the Danish Jarl!
By treachery he slew the good old Jarl!

ALL THE MOURNERS.

By treachery he slew the good Jarl Hako!
By treachery he slew the Danish Jarl!
By treachery he slew the good old Jarl!

*Bursting with indignation the procession again
moves forward and does an indignation dance
once round the chamber. Again Sigrid raises
his hands and speaks.*

SIGRID.

The cursed Saxon slew my father and our Jarl. He
slew our noble Jarl, our venerable, our beloved Jarl!
He slew our great, our aged, and our valiant Jarl.

GORMFLAITH.

The cursed Saxon slew my father and our Jarl! He
slew our noble Jarl, our venerable, our beloved Jarl!
He slew our great, our aged, and our valiant Jarl!

ALL THE MOURNERS.

The cursed Saxon slew thy father and our Jarl! He slew our noble Jarl, our venerable, our beloved Jarl. He slew our great, our aged, and our valiant Jarl.

Overcome with sorrow the procession moves forward and does a dance of sorrow once round the chamber. Again Sigrid raises his hands and speaks.

SIGRID.

This Saxon Earl has slain a thousand Danes! He slays our men and steals our women! Yet no help comes to us across the sea! He is a monster in a human form!

GORMFLAITH.

This Saxon Earl hath slain a thousand Danes! He slays our men and steals our women! Yet no help comes to us across the sea! He is a monster in a human form!

ALL THE MOURNERS.

This Saxon Earl hath slain a thousand Danes! He slays our men and steals our women! Yet no help comes to us across the sea! He is a monster in a human form.

Overwhelmed with despair the procession again moves forward and does a dance of despair once round the chamber. Again Sigrid raises his hands and speaks.

SIGRID.

He is not human, this vile Saxon Earl! He is an evil spirit of the night, this fair-haired blue-eyed evil Saxon Earl, this handsome, smiling, cruel Saxon Earl, this terrible, cunning, treacherous Saxon Earl!

GORMFLAITH.

He is not human, this vile Saxon Earl! He is an evil spirit of the night, this fair-haired, blue-eyed evil Saxon Earl, this handsome, smiling, cruel Saxon Earl, this terrible, cunning, treacherous Saxon Earl!

ALL THE MOURNERS.

He is not human, this vile Saxon Earl! He is an

evil spirit of the night, this fair-haired blue-eyed Saxon Earl, this handsome, smiling, cruel Saxon Earl, this terrible, cunning, treacherous Saxon Earl!

Consumed with awe and hatred the procession moves round and does a dance of dread and deadly hatred once round the chamber. As it does so there is a sound of execration without, and there enters a Saxon thane, fair-haired and foppishly attired, carrying sword and buckler in his hand. He approaches Sigrid, and the procession stops.

THE SAXON THANE, *bowing*.

I bear a message to Jarl Sigrid from Earl Edric.

SIGRID.

What message sends this Saxon to me in this hour of grief that he hath caused?

THE SAXON THANE.

He bids thee make an end of grief, and feast with him instead. He deigns to seek from thee thy sister Gormflaith for his wife.

GORMFLAITH, *flinging a dagger at his feet*.

Give him this dagger, tell the cursed Earl he will wed death ere he wed Hako's daughter.

SIGRID.

Give him my curses, and the curse of every Dane in Danelagh. My father would not give his child to any Saxon earl in England. Thy wicked lord hath slain the good old Jarl, but I stand in his place and do defy this fiend thy master even unto death. He shall not have this noble Dane, my sister. How say ye, Danes?

ALL THE COMPANY.

He shall not have her! (*Raising their swords or their arms above their heads*). The oppressor of our race shall have her not. We swear it!

SIGRID.

We do not fear this evil one. We shall protect my sister unto death.

ALL THE COMPANY.

We do not fear this evil one. We shall protect thy sister unto death. We swear it.

GORMFLAITH.

Thou hearest, Saxon? Danes have no fear of such as this vile Earl. Bid him come seek me with his full array. He'll find me fighting, fighting for his death, fighting to avenge my father's murder. Bid him beware my sword. SIGRID.

Bid him beware my sword! My sword is steeped in vengeance, vengeance for Danish blood, and mine.

ALL THE COMPANY.

Bid him beware our swords! Our swords are steeped in vengeance, vengeance for Danish blood and ours!

THE SAXON THANE.

Have ye not learned, ye heathen Danes, the power of great Earl Edric?

SIGRID.

Saxon, begone. Beware my wrath. Thy race is loved not here.

ALL THE COMPANY, *advancing threateningly and hissing ominously at the Saxon.*

Thy race is loved not here!

Thy race is loved not here!

The Saxon thane withdraws in haste.

SIGRID.

Danes! We have pledged our lives! The Saxon hordes will soon be here. Let all our force be summoned.

Men run to carry out his orders. Others take down the weapons from the walls. Gormflaith tears off her long robes, revealing a short under garment. Throwing open the big chest she takes out a tunic like those worn by the men and hastily puts it on over her head. Over this she fastens chain-armour and a cloak. On her head she places a helmet like the one worn by Sigrid. Then she takes up a long sword and a shield.

GORMFLAITH.

Give me the Raven Standard!

Taking it from the wall Sigrid and she walk up to the bier and lay the sacred Danish flag on the body of their father.

GORMFLAITH AND SIGRID, *kneeling beside the bier.*

Flag of our Fathers! Sacred Standard of our race!
Magic Emblem of our Danish power! Laid on the
corpse of this slain noble Dane our father, let his strong
spirit give thee greater power, to give our vengeance
strength to victory!

ALL THE COMPANY, *standing round in a circle with
bowed heads.*

Flag of our Fathers! Sacred standard of our race!
Magic Emblem of our Danish power! Laid on the
corpse of this slain noble Dane, your father, let his
strong spirit give thee greater power, to give our ven-
geance strength to victory!

Sigrid and Gormflaith rise to their feet.

ALL THE COMPANY, *to Gormflaith with a deep obeisance.*

Awaken thou the magic power that dwelleth in the
sacred standard, with the incantation thou alone mayest
give, the daughter and the sister of our Jarls!

*Sigrid draws his sword and stands behind the
dead Jarl's head, holding the sword stretched
out over the flag.*

*Gormflaith dances a wild weird incantation, with
potent movements and hypnotic ecstatic gestures,
rousing up and infusing with life and energy
the powerful spirits which protect the sacred
raven standard of the Danes. She finishes
her incantation dance with an upward movement
of frenzied transport and then sinks on her knees.
As she does so all do likewise, including Sigrid.
After a few moments' pause thus, Gormflaith rises
to her feet, and all the company follow her example.
Then she and Sigrid take the standard from the
body of the dead Jarl, and holding it upright
between them, take their places at the head of the
people. The harp-players and drummers strike
up a national battle-march, and the procession,
headed by Gormflaith and Sigrid, dances round
the corpse of Jarl Hako the March of the Raven-
Standard, a stately and rhythmical measure*

expressive of all the courage, fervour and pride of the Danes when their destiny called them to battle with their foes.

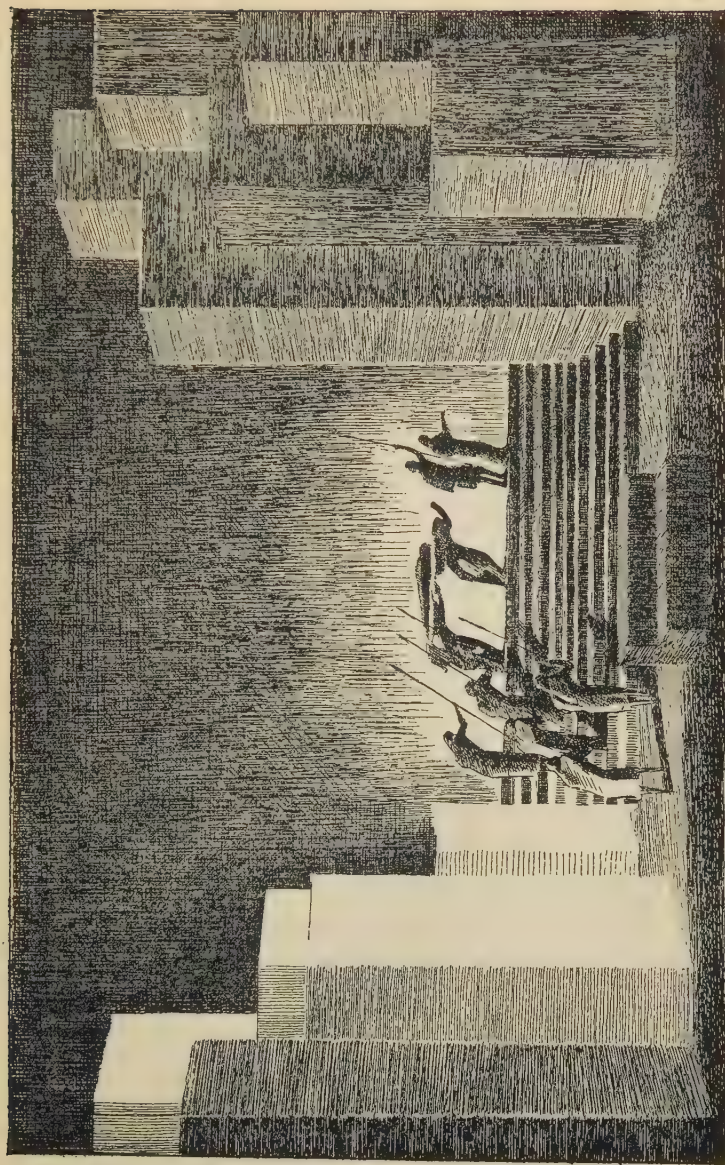
II.

The castle of Earl Edric. A lofty chamber. Walls covered with tapestry. Dim diffused light from narrow windows high up in the walls. On a gigantic throne on a high dais sits the terrible earl, swathed in a cloak of purple. He is in the deepest shadow, and naught but his majestic figure can be seen. Silent and motionless he sits awhile. Then there is a sound of moving feet and voices raised in acclamation without, and there enters the Saxon thane who bore the message to Jarl Sigrid. He makes a profound obeisance before the throne.

THE SAXON THANE.

My lord, the battle is fought. The Danes strove bravely, but we conquered them. Our numbers wore down their resistance, and they fell. The slain amount to hundreds. We bring Jarl Sigrid captive to thy feet. His sister Gormflaith, who herself fought in the fray, lies captive with her people in her castle to attend thy will.

As he finishes his announcement there is a sound of marching men and the beating of drums, and the voices of soldiers singing a triumphant battle-song. In a few moments they enter the chamber. First come the thanes led by their chief, then the ceorls, and lastly the serfs. The thanes wear a white tunic, armour, helmet, and silken mantle, on their legs, blue and yellow stockings, over which are bands of cloth cross-gartered to their knees. The ceorls and serfs are similarly attired, but in coarse-textured stuff, and without the mantle. They dance their triumphant battle-dance round the chamber before the throne of Earl Edric.



No. II.—THE POISONED KISS. SCENE I.

THE SAXON SOLDIERS.

Hail to Earl Edric!
Hail to our Earl!
Hail to our noble Earl!
Noble and valiant Earl,
Famous and mighty Earl,
Noble Earl Edric!

Saxons victorious!
Down with the Danes!
Saxons shall win the day!
Saxons have won the day!
Saxons win every day!
Down with the Danes!

THE COMPANY OF THANES.

We are the Saxon thanes,
Thanes of Earl Edric,
Noble Earl Edric!
We have destroyed the Danes,
Slaughtered the heathen Danes,
Driv'n out the ruthless Danes,
Foes of our people!
We, the brave Saxon thanes,
Thanes of Earl Edric!

THE COMPANY OF CEORLS.

We are the Saxon ceorls,
Ceorls of Earl Edric,
Noble Earl Edric!
We have defied the Danes,
Fought and destroyed the Danes,
Slain the vile Northern Danes,
Bane of our people!
We, the brave Saxon ceorls,
Ceorls of Earl Edric!

THE COMPANY OF SERFS.

We are the Saxon serfs,
Serfs of Earl Edric.
Noble Earl Edric!
We have attacked the Danes,
Slain the rude savage Danes,
Smiting the cursed Danes,
With Saxon axes!
We, the brave Saxon serfs,
Serfs of Earl Edric!

ALL THE SAXON SOLDIERS.

Hail to Earl Edric!
Hail to our Earl!
Hail to our noble Earl,
Noble and valiant Earl,
Famous and mighty Earl,
Noble Earl Edric!

The dance of the Saxons comes to an end, and they halt before the silent and majestic figure on the throne. With a clanking of metal Jarl Sigrid is brought in chains between two guards, and dragged before the throne. The wild swarthy Dane is in strong contrast to the fair-haired, fair-skinned Saxons around him.

THE SAXON THANE.

Here, my dread lord, thy soldiers bring the Danish Jarl, thy captive, who did scorn thy graceful condescension towards his sister. Wilt thou decree his fate?

THE VOICE OF EARL EDRIC, *with majestic indifference.*

Let him partake the fate of those who disobey My Will.

JARL SIGRID, *fiercely.*

Vile Saxon Monster, thou hast slain my father, and thou slayest me, as thou hast slain a thousand others of my race to gratify thy will. Yet shalt thou not wed Gormflaith. My noble sister shall not be thy wife, vile Saxon fiend!

THE VOICE OF EARL EDRIC, *with its majestic indifference.*

Thou sayest truly, Danish Jarl, thy sister shall not be my wife. Now she shall be my harlot.

The guards drag Sigrid from the room. The drummers strike up the triumphal march once more, and the procession moves forward in its battle dance of victory and praise.

THE SAXON SOLDIERS.

Hail to Earl Edric!

Hail to our Earl!

Hail to our noble Earl!

Noble and valiant Earl!

Famous and mighty Earl,

Noble Earl Edric.

Saxons victorious!

Down with the Danes!

Saxons shall win the day!

Saxons have won the day!

Saxons win every day!

Down with the Danes!

III.

The castle of Jarl Hako. Gormflaith and her attendants imprisoned in the chamber. The body of Sigrid lies stretched out on the bier beside that of his father. The two harpers kneel at the head and foot playing a dirge. Gormflaith stands at the head, her arms stretched out over the body. The attendants dance the funeral dance they danced before the body of Hako, in sorrowful procession round the chamber.

GORMFLAITH.

Peace on thy soul, dear brother,

Peace on thy soul!

Thou hast followed thy father so swiftly

He was scarcely yet cold when thou died.

Ye have died as true Danes, ye died fighting,

Peace on your souls!



A Sketch Impression of
THE POISONED KISS. SCENE II.
Using luminous screens.

Now ye both rest with dead heroes,
Dead heroes, dead Danes!
Both of ye died for one purpose,
Both of ye died for your pride,
For the pride, of your race, and for me.
I remain, the last of your people,
The cause of your strife,
I remain to achieve that ye strove for,
To achieve that ye died to attain.

I remain to achieve that ye failed in,
Failed in for me.

This shall I do, then I follow,

Follow my sires,
Follow ye, father and brother,
Seek ye and rest with dead heroes,
Dead heroes, dead Danes!

She takes the Raven-Standard from the side of the bier, where it lies crumpled and blood-stained, and lays it over the bodies of her father and brother. Then she takes her place at the head of the procession and does the mourning dance with them. Presently someone utters a cry and the procession halts. Even the musicians cease playing, so filled with horror is everyone at the words they hear.

A WOMAN CALLED THYRI, *near the window.*

Behold! The Saxon Earl approacheth!

With awe and terror everyone crouches back against the walls of the room. Gormflaith walks deliberately up to the window and glances out, then she lightly leaps on to the high sill and lies down on the broad stone recess, her chin resting on her out-stretched arm. Eagerly she watches the approaching procession without, her brightly lit face betraying all the emotions of her soul.

THYRI, *looking out of the window.*

Look where the cursed Saxons come, their gaudy armour glittering in the sun!

ANOTHER, *almost in a whisper.*

Is he among them?

THYRI.

He leads the band. I see his purple cloak and milk-white steed.

All shudder and cower back, save Gormflaith, who remains motionless and unmoved.

ANOTHER.

They say that fiends and evil spirits ever ride white horses. . . .

They shudder again.

THYRI.

They say he hath green eyes, unlike his blue-eyed race, and that by looking only he can slay a man.

They shudder again.

THE OTHER.

I've heard it said one glance from his fiend's eyes will leave a man fast-rooted where he stands, and motionless.

They shudder.

THYRI.

I see him clearer now. This monster hath on his vile hands more Danish blood than water lies in yonder lake.

They shudder.

THE OTHER.

They say he hath seized full twenty Danish women in one day, and on the morrow sent for thirty more. . . .

All shudder.

ANOTHER.

Why loves he Danish women more than Saxon?

THE OTHER.

The simpering Saxons with their soft sweet ways are all too dull and lifeless for his taste. He loves the fierce and warlike lively Dane. 'Twas why he sought our mistress. . . .

THYRI.

I cannot see his face as yet. They say that he is fair to look upon, this fiend.

THE OTHER.

I've heard it said no man in all the world is half so beautiful as he.

ANOTHER.

No man can look upon his face and still resist the spell, so strange and magical a charm hath he.

THYRI.

It is his eyes, his fiend's green eyes. . . .

THE OTHER.

I've heard he hath the strength of twenty men, and knowing no pity, having no restraint of honour or of love, he ever hath his way and does not know defiance to his will.

THYRI.

I see him now quite clearly, a hundred paces and he will be here.

All shudder.

ANOTHER.

Hold up your heads, both men and women. Remember ye are Danes!

THE OTHER.

We fear not for ourselves. We take our fate, whatever it be, with Danish pride and steadfastness. It is our mistress that we tremble for. Hers is the sorrow, hers will be the pain and shame. For us it is as nothing.

ANOTHER.

Is there no means to save her? No deceit? Could she not stab him when he shows her love?

THYRI.

Women are searched ere they approach his presence. It hath been tried and failed.

THE OTHER.

I've heard a story of a girl who thought to save herself by smearing of herself with mud and making her person odious in his eyes. So overcome was she with this fiend's beauty when she went to him, that when he scorned her she straight slew herself out of remorse and longing for his love.

THYRI.

They say that no one can resist his beauty, that once he loves them they all die of longing, for he loves not twice one woman.

THE OTHER.

Hark! He enters the courtyard. I hear the horses' hoofs. Canst see his face?

THYRI.

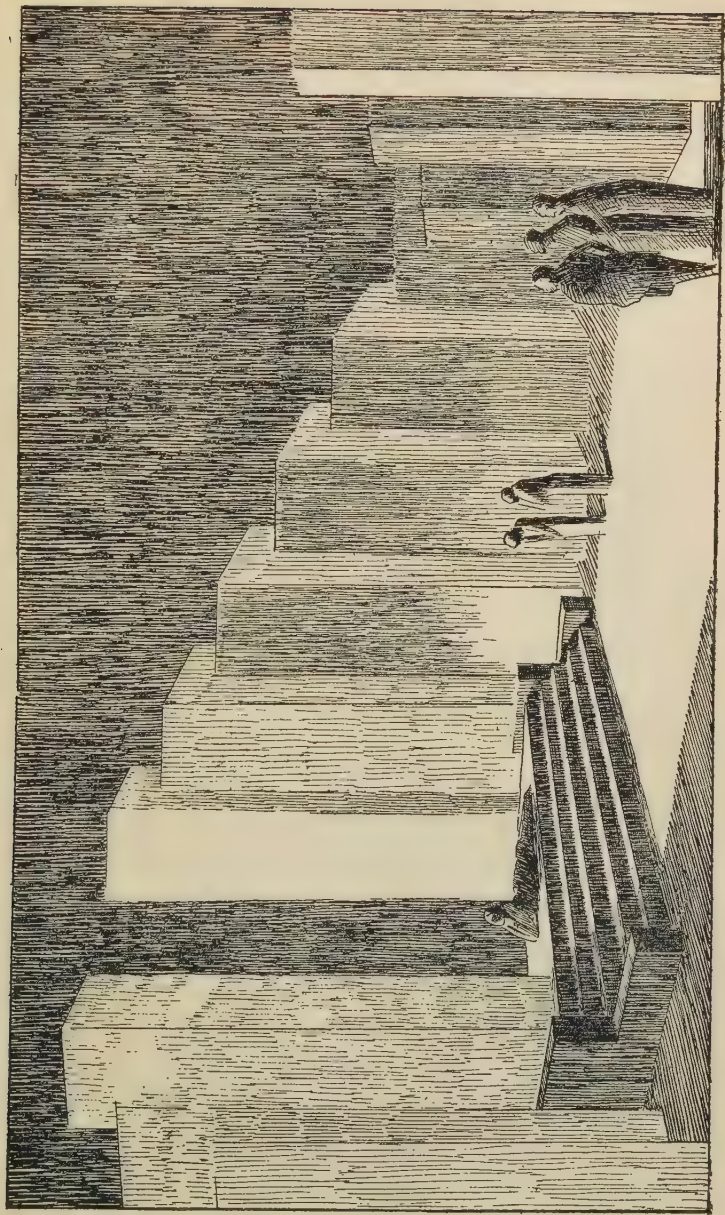
A few paces more, a few paces more, and I shall be able to see him. He is just beneath the window. Look! Ah, but he is beautiful, he is indeed beautiful. He is the noblest-looking man mine eyes have e'er beheld. Report of him is true; the inhuman fiend hath an unearthly beauty in his cruel fair face. . . . Perhaps he is an evil Saxon god that dwells on earth. . . .

There is a long and awe-stricken silence. All cover their faces with their hands save Gormflaith. The expression on the brightly-lit face of Gormflaith has altered with the words spoken by her people. From bitter hatred and vengeance it has changed to awe and then to wonder, and finally, when she sees the Saxon close at hand, an expression of amazed fascination, almost of love, battles with the hatred in her looks. Then there is a sound of clanking steel without and fast approaching feet. The Saxon thane enters and stands in the doorway. The Danes cower petrified in their corners.

THE SAXON THANE, *brusquely.*

Earl Edric orders that the Danish woman Gormflaith attend him in his chamber one hour after sunset, perfumed and bathed, apparelled in a single garment only.

The Saxon thane retires. There is a horrified silence. Gormflaith remains as though she had not heard. The others lower their heads in sympathy. Suddenly Gormflaith leaps down from the window and advances into the middle of the room with resolute and commanding mien.



No. IV.—THE POISONED KISS. SCENE III.

GORMFLAITH, *brusquely*.

Thyri!

THYRI, *eagerly*.

Lady, I am here.

GORMFLAITH.

Go to my garden. Seek the northern corner where my Danish flowers grow. Bring thence one of those strange green blossoms that grow by the pool. The Danish Densgirt; thou dost know the flower. It grows apart and solitary, and has a sweet and pungent odour.

THYRI.

The Densgirt! Yea, I know the flower. Thou mean'st that deadly herb of which a petal falling from his wreath into the cup of good Jarl Harold's son straight slew him when he crushed it with his lip, so that he fell down dead among his feasting friends?

GORMFLAITH.

That is the herb I wish. Bring me a flower in bloom.

THYRI.

Lady, it is a poisonous weed. I fear to touch a flower so rank and deadly.

GORMFLAITH, *scornfully*.

Thou fearest? Thou, a Dane! It will not hurt thy fingers, girl!

Thyri withdraws humbly and fearfully on her errand.

GORMFLAITH.

You others, you prepare my bath. And you that crouch down yonder, burnish up my corselet of chain-steel. I may but wear one garment. It shall be my Danish armour, for I go to war. I go to fight the final battle in the war in which my father and my brother died. I fight before my fathers and I go to join my sires. I will approach them in the costume of my people when they die defiant of their foes.

She draws aside a curtain and passes out. The others crouch back against the walls, their hands over their faces.

IV.

The chamber of Earl Edric. A huge chamber lit by two torches fastened in brackets on the posts at the foot of a large wooden bed. The walls of the chamber cannot be seen save vaguely by the curtained entrance. Nothing is visible save the bed, covered with a coverlet of purple, the torches and Earl Edric who stands leaning against the bed, between the torches, swathed in his purple cloak, his fair hair and beautiful evil face lit brightly by the flame. Upright and majestic he stands, lost in thought.

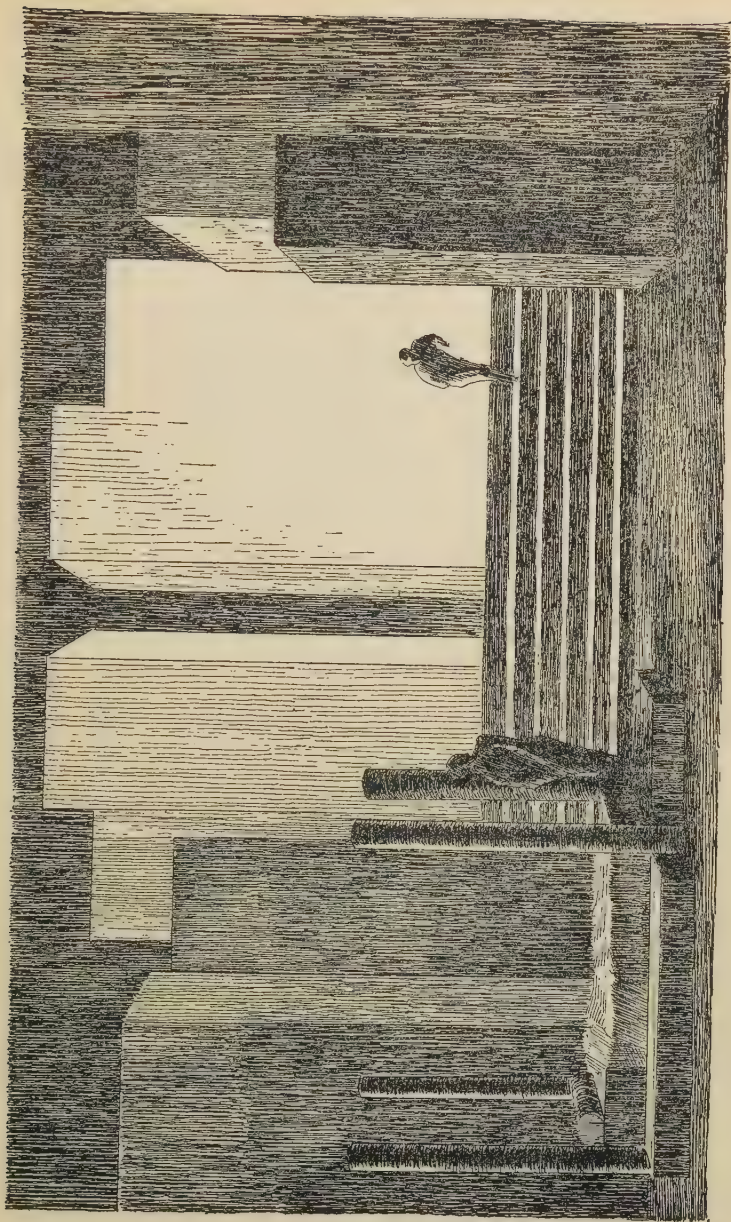
Presently the curtain over the doorway is drawn aside softly, and Gormflaith enters, clad only in her shining chain-armour. Earl Edric does not observe her until she enters the circle of light cast by the torches and the glint of her steel corselet glitters as she moves. Between her lips is the green Danish flower she has sent for.

Stealthily she strides up to Edric, who watches her curiously, and without surprise or emotion, a sarcastic, cruel little smile on his lips. For a moment she stands, looking him in the eyes, but he does not flinch or move, but just stands motionless and returns her gaze. Then she moves backwards, and, giving expression to a transport of hate, dances a wild Danish dance of hatred and vengeance before her majestic enemy. Gradually he appears to evince a little more interest in her. He keeps his magnetic eyes on her, the sarcastic, cruel little smile still hovering round his lips.

Slowly she falls beneath the spell of his beauty and magnetism, and an admixture of passion and seductiveness makes itself perceivable in her dancing. Hatred and love are kindred emotions, in essence they are made of the same fiery substance, and the transition from the one to the other is simple and natural when the cause is definite and compelling. Hating him before she saw him, her glimpse of Earl Edric when he arrived sowed the seeds of love which the present intimacy and the proximity of his magnetic personality ripens swiftly beneath his gaze.

Soon her emotions are expressing themselves in a dance of passion, though the awe and hatred are there as well. Then the beauty and seduction of Gormflaith begin to move Edric. As her passion is intensified, so does his eagerness increase. Her movements become an ever more concentrated temptation to one who is ever more eager to succumb. Presently he leaves his position at the foot of the bed, and follows her slowly as she retreats from him in mingled love and awe. Ever more swiftly and eagerly he follows her, ever more vigorously she eludes his grasp. At length the moment comes when she must decide whether she shall give way to her love and be conquered by the magic spell of his beauty, or flame forth her hatred and wreak her vengeance. She decides with unhesitating suddenness. By giving way to the former shall she achieve the latter, and go to her fathers proudly to join the dead heroes of her race.

Throwing herself into the arms of the passion-tortured Earl Edric, she sinks on to her knees. He bends over her eagerly, and with her head thrown back she gives him her lips, the green blossom held firmly by its stalk between her teeth. Feverishly he presses her lips with his own, crushing the flower as he does so. For a long moment they remain thus, then he draws back, and she rises to her feet. Raising his hand to his mouth he staggers backwards, his features distorted with agony, staggers again, stumbles and falls in a heap on the floor. Gormflaith watches him reel, then she raises her arms above her head as though appealing to the unseen heroes she goes to seek. Throwing back her head she stretches herself upwards ecstatically for a moment, and then falls likewise and lies still for evermore.



No. V.—THE POISONED KISS. SCENE IV.

The Renaissance.

IV.

The Renaissance.

A MEDIAEVAL DANCE-DRAMA.

SYMBOLISING THE TRANSITION FROM ONE HISTORICAL
EPOCH TO ANOTHER.

The scene, which is representative of the spiritual world of the Middle Ages before the Renaissance, is suggestive of a magnificent example of Gothic architecture, spacious, lofty, with towering columns rising out of sight, a dim religious light filtering through stained-glass windows, an atmosphere of saintly calm, the mellow peace of the dark ages when stagnation of soul was accompanied by repression and asceticism in the moral and religious outlook. On the walls are hung implements of war, swords and shields, daggers, axes and spears, coats of mail, and stout jerkins of leather, signs of life, rich and active, discarded by the holy and retained as the symbols of rejected evil. Sometimes the weapons are varied by a musical instrument, a harp, a viol, or a flute. On an altar decorated with lilies, and covered with a brodered coverlet, are placed bread and wine, with golden chalices, and brodered vestments. Pictures of saintly persons of past ages with all the sickly, drawn features, agonised expressions, and depressing life-denying aspects of such works, are hung here and there on the pillars and behind the altar.

There is a sound of mournful and holy chanting, and a row of monks appear. Their heads are hung low, their movements are dejected and weak, their voices are sad and almost whining, they have all the characteristics of the pictures on the walls, as they slouch in dejected procession, telling their beads or reading out of the little books which they carry.

At the same time the sound of women's voices is heard, chanting the same Latin chant and in the same

tone. A row of nuns appear with slow ascetical tread on the opposite side, and they are in every way the female counterpart of the monks.

Then come men and women of the world, clad in sober mantles and dark cloaks, walking with slow and reverent tread, reading from little books or lost in contemplation with crossed hands, holding their rosaries or their crucifixes suspended round their necks. Among them there is one little group with cheerful countenance and bold though reverent movements.

Down the centre comes a saintly pontifical personage, clad in brodered vestments and holding a sceptre indicative of his high office. He is the most ascetic of all present, the most typical of their kind. He represents in his every feature and every movement one who has ever sought to suppress and distort his joyous instincts and his love of life, greatly has he mortified himself, very chaste, very life-denying is this bent and sickly figure with sour face and downcast eyes.

While the monks and the nuns pursue their way, chanting and slouching along, their movements in time with their voices, crossing one another's path before the altar and going on round the building, the people come to a standstill before the pontifical personage who stands dejectedly before the altar, lost in reverent meditation, they themselves standing in a similar attitude, all save the little group of cheerful aspect who maintain a normal though solemn demeanour.

Presently the pontifical personage raises his mournful countenance from off his breast, and intones a new Latin chant, more dreary and depressing than the other, and more voluminous, for all the people join in and sing it to his time.

Then the monks and the nuns return, having completed their round, proceeding in the same manner as before. Down the centre, through the people who are chanting with bowed heads and downcast eyes, come a procession of new monks, very holy men indeed, scourging themselves with knotted thongs as they advance.

The pontifical personage drops on to his knees, and all those present do likewise. Again the chant changes, this time for one more mournful than ever, so mournful that it is almost grotesque. Only the cheerful-faced little party infuse any life and vigour into their chanting.

When this new chant is in full swing, there suddenly appears the Spirit of Renaissance, bounding up the centre among the kneeling and pre-occupied people.

The Spirit of Renaissance is strangely in contrast with the scene in which she appears. Of magnificent physique, the embodiment of health and activity, radiating joy and the love of life with every movement, she is clad in a garment of crimson and is glittering with jewels from head to foot. Over and among the kneeling people she dances, with movements of passionate intensity, ubiquitous and compelling, sometimes dignified, sometimes lascivious, gay, luxurious, strong, fantastic and mischievous, respecting no one, irreverent and unholy, spreading her charm over all, intoxicating their dormant senses and placing them under her spell. At the same time the sun comes out suddenly in the world outside, and through the medium of the stained-glass windows the dim light is turned into a gay medley of brightly-coloured rays. As she dances, the Spirit of Renaissance sings a song, a gay, lively Boccaccio song, an enchanting, unholy measure, a shameless, rollicking cinquecento song in the vulgar tongue, joyous, abandoned and obscene.

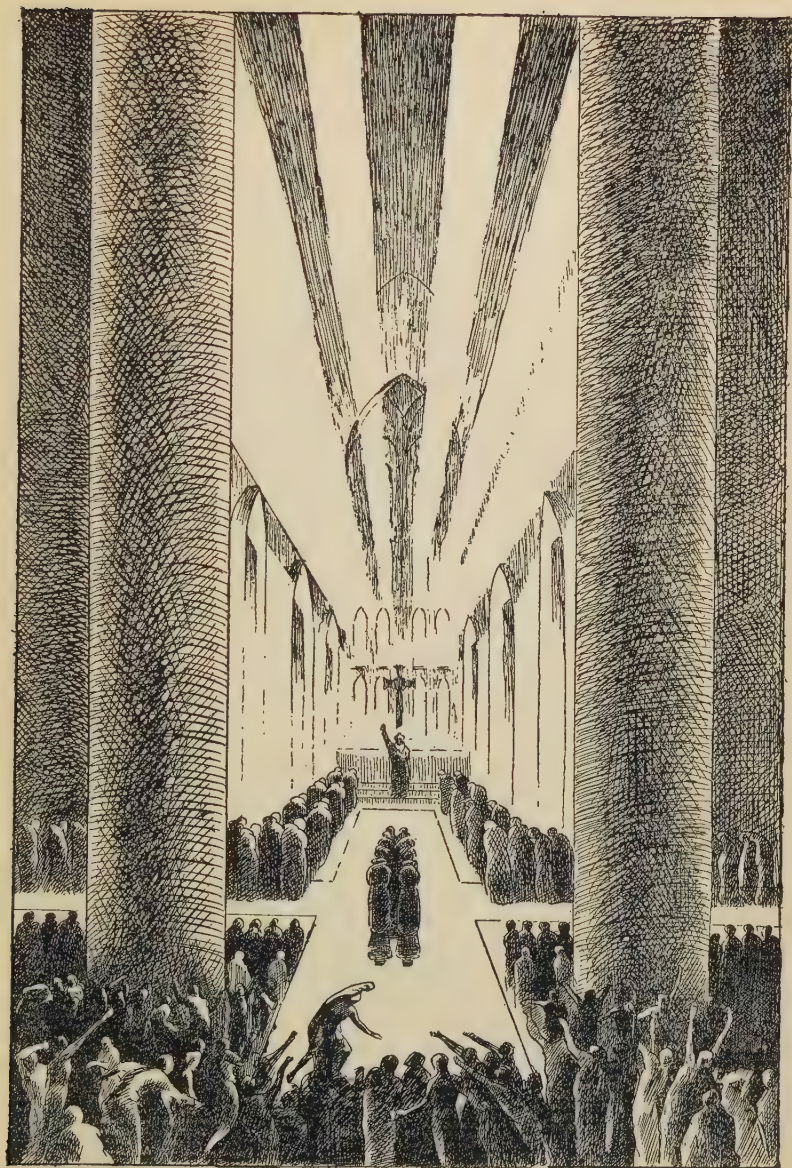
Gradually the people join in. As they come under her spell they cease their chanting in the Latin tongue, and begin to sing softly, gradually becoming bolder, singing louder, and rising to their feet. Soon the new song replaces the old chant, which becomes confined to the monks and nuns only, and finally almost ceases altogether. Then the people begin to dance, imitating the Spirit that leaps among them, weaving round them a web of new life. Presently the slouch of the perambulating monks and nuns changes by slow degrees to the joyous measure, and the scene lately so mournful

becomes a medley of light and colour. Ever they grow more intoxicated, and their movements become more abandoned.

Then the pontifical personage falls a prey, and turning to the altar seizes a chalice and drinks a long draught of wine. Immediately the people run to do likewise. Wildly they drink from the golden chalices, laughing and singing, and resuming their dance. When they reach the height of their freedom they throw off their sombre cloaks, and turning them, put them on inside out, revealing brilliantly coloured silks and satins, the monks who were scourging themselves go to the walls and take down the weapons and don the coats of mail and the leather jerkins, others take down the musical instruments and begin to play them, while others deck themselves in such vestments and coloured materials as they can find, casting from them their dull habits and going in their shirts if they can find nothing else to put on. Taking the little books from which they were lately reading pious words some now strike fantastic attitudes and read love poems to the gay women who have cast aside their long dreary robes and dance shamelessly in any coloured vestment they can lay their hands on, or in such garments as they wore underneath. Taking the lilies from the altar the people throw them joyously at one another.

Surreptitiously in the medley the Spirit of Renaissance slips away, but the gay scene continues unabated, no one noticing that she has gone, the pontifical personage leading the revel with a rollicking song which he reads from his book, marking time for the dances with the sceptre of his office.

Only the cheerful, stalwart-faced little group remains unaffected by the change, and just one small band of very holy men who have been entirely unmoved by the Spirit of Renaissance from the beginning. The former pay no attention to the revels. The latter look on with horror and dismay, raising their crossed hands above their heads, and continuing their chant.



NO. VI.—THE RENAISSANCE

The Scorpions of Ysit.

The Scorpions of Ysit.

THIS little dance comedy is taken from a story of the Goddess Ysit, found on the Metternich stela. Accompanied by Her guard of seven scorpions, Tefen and Befen, Mestet and Mestetef, Petet, Thetet, and Maatet, the Goddess Ysit walks abroad, called from the house of Her evil brother Set by Tahuti, the wise deity. She is weary, and desires to rest in the house of a marshwoman, but the marshwoman, seeing the seven scorpions, is frightened, and will not ask Her in, shutting the door rudely in the face of the Goddess. Ysit goes on to another hut close by, where another marshwoman, although frightened, conquers her fear, and invites the Goddess inside. In the absence of Ysit, and against Her orders, the scorpions hatch a plot, lay all their poisons on the sting of one, and send him to sting to death the child of the marshwoman who refused hospitality to their Mistress.

Presently Ysit returns, and finding Her guard ready waiting, and looking very innocent, prepares to resume Her way. But She catches sight of the dead child, whom its weeping mother has brought out of her hut, and, comprehending the situation, brings the dead one back to life by means of Her magic. The thankful mother offers the Goddess her jewels and few poor treasures in gratitude, but Ysit haughtily refuses and indicates the good woman who gave Her hospitality in spite of her fear, whereupon the treasures are humbly presented to her, and Ysit resumes her way, as She appeared, surrounded by Her guard.

V.

The Scorpions of Ysit.

AN EGYPTIAN FANTASY DANCE.

Evening in the marshes of the Delta. Swamps of tall rushes. Two poor houses made of papyrus reeds. Music of pipes, a quaint march-melody. The Goddess Ysit appears with Her guard of seven scorpions, Tefen and Befen, Mestet and Mestetef, Petet, Thetet, and Maatet. Petet marching in front, Thetet and Maatet on either side, slightly behind, clear the way, Mestet and Mestetef march on either side of the Deity, Tefen and Befen behind Her. They march round to the quaint melody of the pipes. Ysit is clad in a close-fitting garment of fine linen, hanging from beneath Her breasts and supported by straps over Her shoulders. She wears Her wig and Her crown with the horns and disk, the uraeus on Her forehead. In Her hands are the Symbol of Life and the Flail. As they march Ysit chants to the sound of march music. And this is Her chant.

YSIT, *chanting majestically.*

Ysit! Ysit! I am Ysit!

Ysit, the Great Goddess

The Mistress of Magic,

The Speaker of Spells!

Out of My House have I come,

The House of My brother, the House of Set.

Tahuti has called Me to come,

Tahuti the doubly Great God,

Tahuti the Mighty in Truth.

He called, and behold! I come forth

As Riya descends in the West

I am Ysit, Ysit the Great Goddess!

The Mistress of Magic, the Speaker of Spells!

With Me come My seven scorpions,
 Come to guard Me, come to guide Me:
 Tefen and Befen,
 Mestet and Mestetef,
 Petet, Thetet, and Maatet!
 Behind Me are Tefen and Befen;
 On either side, Mestet and Mestetef;
 Petet, Thetet, and Maatet, before Me,
 Clearing the way that none should oppose Me,
 Clearing the way that no man should hinder Me,
 Tefen and Befen,
 Mestet and Mestetef,
 Petet, Thetet, and Maatet!
 I am Ysit, Ysit, the Great Goddess!
 The Mistress of Magic, the Speaker of Spells!
 YSIT, *with an imperious gesture towards each in turn.*
 Tefen and Befen,
 Mestet and Mestetef,
 Petet, Thetet, and Maatet!
 Beware of the Black One!
 Call not the Red One!
 Look not at children, nor at innocent creatures,
 Tefen and Befen,
 Mestet and Mestetef,
 Petet, Thetet and Maatet!

The attitude of Ysit, and Her movements, betoken weariness, and presently Her procession comes to a standstill in front of one of the little reed houses. Petet knocks at the door with her claw, and reverently makes way for Ysit, who steps forward to speak with the woman of the hut, the scorpions meanwhile forming up into a double line on either side of Her, their heads lowered till they touch the ground, their tails raised high over their backs. The door is opened and the woman appears, holding a child by the hand. She recognises Ysit and assumes the correct attitude of reverence for those in the presence of Gods and Kings, back bent and hands before face to shield the eyes

from the blinding radiance of the Deity. She has caught sight of the scorpions, and an expression of terror comes over her bearing. Ysit indicates haughtily but kindly that She is weary and would deign to repose within. The marsh woman looks up in a scared manner, glancing at the seven scorpions escorting Ysit, bows, hesitates, glances again, bows abjectly, hesitates and finally turns round and disappears within her hut, slamming the door behind her, and noisily bolting it in the face of Ysit. Ysit, with a gesture of wrath and haughty disdain, steps back, Her seven scorpions form round Her in their original formation, the quaint reed-pipe march melody recommences, and they resume their march round. As before, Ysit chants as She marches, accompanying Her words with an imperious gesture towards each scorpion in turn.

I am Ysit! Ysit the Great Goddess!

The Mistress of Magic, the Speaker of Spells!

Tefen and Befen,

Mestet and Mestetef,

Petet, Thetet, and Maatet!

Beware of the Black One,

Call not the Red One,

Look not at children, nor at the innocent creatures,

Tefen and Befen,

Mestef and Mestetef,

Petet, Thetet, and Maatet!

They halt in front of the reed cottage on the left.

Petet knocks at the door with her claw, and reverently make way for Ysit who steps forward to speak with the woman of the hut, the scorpions meanwhile forming up into a double line on either side of Her, heads down, tails up. The door is opened, and the woman appears. She recognises Ysit and assumes the correct attitude for those in the presence of Gods and Kings, back bent and hands before face to shield the eyes

from the blinding radiance of the Deity. She has caught sight of the scorpions, and an expression of terror comes over her bearing. Ysit indicates haughtily but kindly that She is weary and would deign to repose within. The marsh woman looks up in a scared manner, glancing at the seven scorpions escorting Ysit, bows, hesitates, glances again, bows abjectly, hesitates, and finally, her devoutness overcoming her fear, bends low her head and steps aside, holding wide the door for Ysit to pass within. Ysit enters the hut, and the marsh woman with bent back and eyes shielded, follows Her reverently at a distance, closing the door behind her. The seven scorpions then proceed to disport themselves on their own. They prowl round the open space in front of the huts in line, thoughtfully. As each one passes the door of the hut they first stopped at she shakes her claw threateningly at it and passes on. The movements of the scorpions are grotesque. The second time round all stop as each one reaches the hut in turn. Each one examines the hut and notices a space between the lintel and the door, performing a little gambol of delight as she notices it. They all halt, form a circle round Tefen, and wag their heads at one another. Each waves her claw round her head and clicks her tail on the ground. One by one they start off again, all except Tefen, who stays still in the centre, her head on the floor. One by one they leave the ranks, back up to Tefen's tail and lay their stings on hers, scraping off their poisons and depositing it on top of her poison. When all have done this they scamper round Tefen in a circle, delirious with mischievous delight. Eventually they line up, three on each side, making an avenue in front of the hut door. Simultaneously they lay their heads on the ground with a loud click, at the same time raising their tails as high as they will

go. *At this signal Tefen starts off and waddles up to the door, makes herself as small as she can, squeezes herself through the space between' the lintel and the door, and disappears. In a second there is a scream, a sound of overturning furniture, more screams, and Tefen reappears at the opening and scampers back highly pleased with herself. Then they all raise their heads and lower their tails and wave their claws with delight, finally forming up and marching back to the hut from which they started, where they take up their stand outside, as they were when Ysit left them, heads down, tails up, as innocent as lambs. Meanwhile the screams and groans continue, until presently the door of the hut opens and the woman rushes out wailing dismally, her child, apparently lifeless and inert, in her arms. She lays the child prostrate on the ground and buries her face among his garments, sobbing quietly the while. Then the door of the other woman's hut opens, and Ysit appears. She takes Her place among Her guard, who all look respectful and innocent, as all good servants should, the march of the reed-pipes starts, and they move off. Ysit commences Her chant.*

Ysit! Ysit! I am Ysit!

Ysit, the Great Goddess!

The Mistress of Magic, the Speaker of Spells!

Out of My House have I come,

The House of My brother, the House of Set,

Tahuti has called Me to come.

An extra loud sob of the marsh woman draws Her attention to the woman sobbing on the body of her child, and She stops Her march. The woman, looking up and seeing this, jumps up and, leaving her child, runs up to Ysit, regardless of the angry scorpions who hiss at her and wave their feelers wrathfully, and falls on her face before the Goddess, smelling the earth before Her in the traditional

manner, moaning and supplicating Her. Ysit looks at her distantly and haughtily at first, then, seeing the prostrate child and grasping the situation, Her heart softens, and, followed by the marsh-woman, She walks back to where the dead child lies, slashing Mestet and Mestetef, Tefen and Befen, angrily with Her Flail as She passes them. Like dogs they wince, then wag their tails as She passes on. Tefen playfully catches the Flail in her claw, and gets an extra slash for her joke. Ysit passes round and round the dead child, performing strange magic steps, and chanting to the sound of music.

I am Ysit! Ysit the Great Goddess!
 The Mistress of Magic, the Speaker of Spells!
 With the Power of My Voice can I awaken the dead!
 I speak, I speak the Words of Power,
 The Words that even the dead can hear.

*She crouches at his head, She crouches at his feet,
 She lays Her hands on his body. Then She passes
 round him once more, chanting true of voice as
 She goes.*

YSIT, *chanting with measured cadence and careful intonation :*

I am Ysit! Ysit, the Great Goddess!
 The Mistress of Magic, the Speaker of Spells!
 O Poison of Tefen, come out of him!
 Come out and fall to the ground!
 I am Ysit, the Great Enchantress,
 The Great Enchantress, the Speaker of Spells!
 Fall down, O Poison of Mestet!
 Hasten not, Poison of Mestetef!
 Rise not, Poison of Petet and Thetet!
 Approach not, O Poison of Maatet!
 For I am Ysit, the Great Enchantress,
 The Great Enchantress, the Speaker of Spells!
 The child shall live, the poison shall die.
 As Horu is strong and well for his mother,
 As Horu is strong and well for Me,

So shall this child be strong and well,
 So shall this child be well for his mother!
 For I am Ysit, the Great Enchantress,
 The Great Enchantress, the Speaker of Spells!

The child revives, scrambles up, and runs to his mother, who folds him in her arms in an ecstasy of delight. Ysit meanwhile resumes Her place among Her guard, and prepares to continue on Her way. The marsh woman leaves her child and runs into her hut, emerging in a few seconds with her arms full of odds and ends of jewellery, bracelets, bead necklaces, rings, and coloured vases, which she takes up to Ysit and offers to lay at Her feet. Ysit, seeing her intention, motions her to take them instead to the other marsh-woman who is standing at the door of the hut in which Ysit rested. This she does, and lays them at the feet of the delighted woman who welcomed Ysit in despite of her fear of the scorpions. Then to the sound of the quaint reed-pipe march Ysit pursues Her way, surrounded by Her guard, chanting the while.

YSIT, *chanting as She goes Her way.*

Ysit! Ysit! I am Ysit!

Ysit, the Great Goddess!

The Mistress of Magic, the Speaker of Spells!

Out of My House have I come,

The House of My brother, the House of Set!

Tahuti has called Me to come,

Tahuti, the doubly Great God!

Tahuti the Mighty in Truth!

He called, and behold! I come forth

As Riya descends in the west

I am Ysit! Ysit, the Great Goddess!

The Mistress of Magic, the Speaker of Spells!

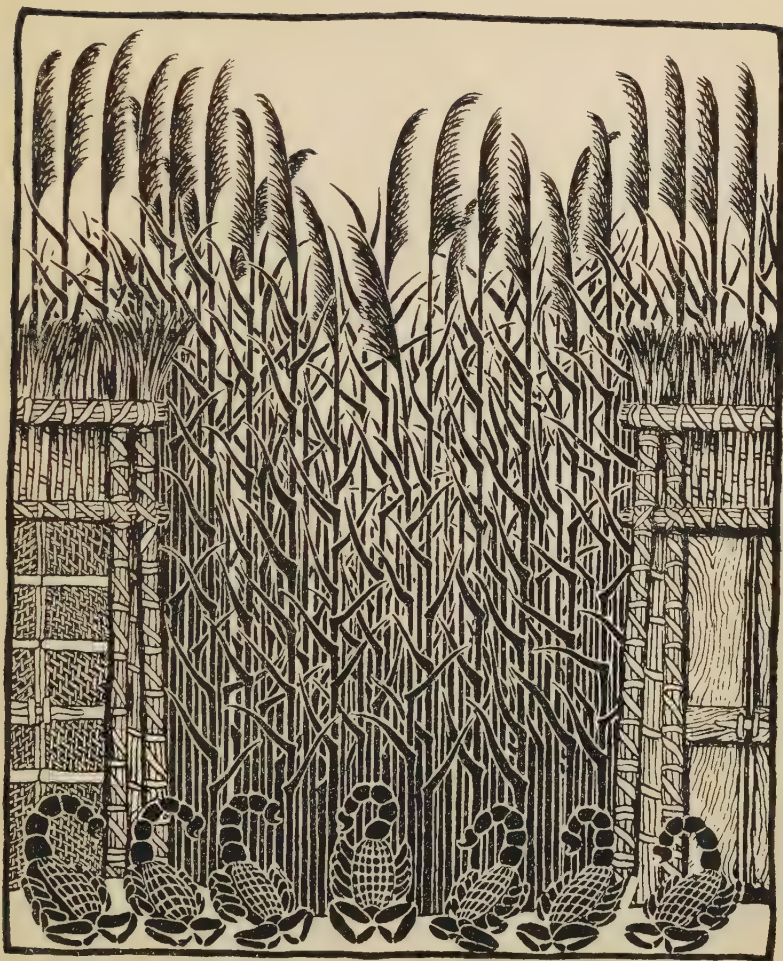
With Me come My seven scorpions,

Come to guard Me, come to guide Me:

Tefen and Befen,

Mestet and Mestetef,

Petet, Thetet, and Maatet!
Behind Me are Tefen and Befen;
On either side Mestet and Mestetef;
Petet, Thetet, and Maatet, before Me,
Clearing the way that none should oppose Me,
Clearing the way that no man should hinder Me,
Tefen and Befen,
Mestet and Mestetef,
Petet, Thetet and Maatet!
I am Ysit! Ysit, the Great Goddess!
The Mistress of Magic, the Speaker of Spells!
Tefen and Befen,
Mestet and Mestetef,
Petet, Thetet, and Maatet,
Beware of the Black One!
Call not the Red One!
Look not at children, nor at innocent creatures,
Tefen and Befen,
Mestet and Mestetef,
Petet, Thetet, and Maatet,
For I am Ysit! Ysit, the Great Goddess!
The Mistress of Magic, the Speaker of Spells!



No. VII.—THE SCORPIONS OF YSIT.

The Cardinal's Bracelet.

VI.

The Cardinal's Bracelet.

A STUDY OF THE CINQUECENTO.

PERSONS:

CESARE BORGIA, Cardinal of Valencia (son of Pope Alexander VI.).

VIOLANTE, an Italian Lady.

DONNA SANCIA DI ARAGON.

Men and Women for two crowd movements.

SCENE—THE GARDENS OF THE VATICAN.

A Mostyn Garden ("The Signal," or "The Cardinal's Garden.") In front of a plain deep-blue evening or night sky an arch of mysterious foliage, a broad square pillar on the right; beneath it a stone seat.

FIRST MOVEMENT.

Cardinal Borgia, in scarlet, moves solemnly across the darkened stage, followed by his suite. He seats himself in the great chair beneath the pillar. His scarlet robe is silhouetted against the white stone. He dismisses his people with solemnity and a cardinal's benediction. His suite retire. He takes from his robe a bracelet of emeralds and gazes upon it. A beam of light plays upon his features.

SECOND MOVEMENT.

Violante, heavily cloaked, approaches and kneels before him, gazing up into his face. Solemnly he blesses her. She appears unsatisfied and continues to gaze raptly at the beautiful face of the young cardinal. He blesses her once more (an element of church music must emphasise this). She ignores his benediction. His thoughts wander from her. His eyes catch sight

of the bracelet lying in his other hand upon his knee. He falls into a reverie, holding his hand up in automatic benediction.

THIRD MOVEMENT.

Violante rises from her knees, steps back and throws off her cloak. Clad in vivid green, she moves against a background of indigo (the atmosphere is a deep purple, green, blue). Cesare sits huddled on his throne, a vivid figure of scarlet, lost in abstraction, an arresting splash of magnificence. To Violante he is something divine, the most perfect human thing her mind can comprehend, clad in the awful dignity of a representative of God. Her movements are worship.

As she dances Cesare's eyes slowly turn away from their dream-world, and fix themselves upon her, austere, coldly, unemotionally, disapprovingly.

As the emotions of adoration find expression in the movements of Violante, a wider tract of her soul is called into activity and allowed to sway her and find expression. Her movements are still worship, but passionate worship, worship of Cesare the man, not Cesare the cardinal.

The eyes of Cesare seem to grow brighter, his attention fixes itself upon her with ever more concentration. His imagination begins to stir. Cesare the cardinal is becoming Cesare the man.

Violante falls completely beneath the sway of her passion. Her movements are fraught with the whole and utter intensity of the passionate Italian nature. They express a welling-up, an outpouring of erotic emotion, sublimated in its artistic expression, that would be utterly beyond the power of words, did she essay it in speech; only in movement can such things be expressed.

The austere and awe-inspiring figure in scarlet that sat huddled in deep meditation has become an upright and living person. All abstraction has faded from his features, animation has crept into his face, and into his form, until he has become a tense and palpitating

human being with wide eyes blazing with emotion, and his beautiful pale face alive and eagerly bent forward.

FOURTH MOVEMENT.

Cesare rises from his seat and advances. Violante withdraws a little. Cesare casts from him his "purple," throwing it carelessly, a beautiful scarlet splash, over the stone. Cesare the future Duke of Valentinois and Romagna is revealed, Cesare the handsomest man of his age, the man who ever wore beneath his cardinal's robe the costume of a Spanish nobleman, the man who trained his body and developed his muscles, as he developed his mind, from childhood, not for the Church but for that which afterwards he attempted, the domination of Italy.

He holds out his arms and Violante goes to him. Holding him at arms' length she looks into his eyes. Taking his bracelet of emeralds he seizes her right arm and fastens it on her above the elbow.

FIFTH MOVEMENT.

A smile of joy irradiates her face. She moves backwards. He follows. Together they express in dance-movement the true romance of love rather than the foolish and insincere running away of a woman that a man may chase her hectically and ridiculously and finally capture her. The Borgias of this world love not such hypocrisy. When they love they are loved, and love is understood. These two simply express in movement the ecstasy of the moment in which they find themselves, where all that has to be said is the expression of the emotion that each has called forth in the other. A depth of emotion, again, for the expression of which words would be utterly inadequate, and which it is the primary function of movement, dancing, to express.

The culminating moment of this is, of course, a kiss, the ultimate symbol of love-fulfilment in art. When a Spanish nobleman and a south Italian lady of the Cinquecento kiss one another under these circumstances

the kiss is a real one and very beautiful—like all real things.

SIXTH MOVEMENT.

There is a sound of approaching feet, heralded by heraldic trumpets (suggested at any rate in the music). Cesare and Violante fall asunder. Cesare dives for his "purple," and urges Violante forward. Glancing hurriedly for a means of escape, she makes up her mind, leaps upon the great chair and scrambles to the broad summit of the pillar, on which she lies face downwards, a brilliant green form above the white stone, against the darker foliage beyond. Before Cesare can do more than gather up his scarlet robe and throw it athwart his body, Donna Sancia di Aragon appears, followed by her people.

All things must be done to express that which were more simply expressed in a spoken sentence—were spoken words not likely to shatter the tension of the piece. Heralds before her, gay ladies-in-waiting behind, gorgeous garments upon her, and a crown upon her head, emphasise the fact that she is a royal personage, one whose favour is valuable indeed to an ambitious intriguer such as Cesare. Beyond this, Donna Sancia is the embodiment of exuberance, activity and irresponsible gaiety.

She greets Cesare exultantly. Cesare bows low. Her procession dances round him, and she waves them away.

SEVENTH MOVEMENT.

Immediately they are alone she makes love to him. Considered the most wanton woman of her day, she had great qualities of character which bound Cesare to her and to her alone of all women. She has a personality very different from the passionate simplicity and directness of Violante. She is a Spaniard, like Cesare. She is also a princess, and has a hauteur in her movements. There is a Spanish coquetry in her movements and in her love-making. Cesare is dealing with one who forms part of his own life and ambitions, not a

dream-creature, but an equal and a pawn in the game of his relentless ambitions. Violante has passed like a waking thought, but she has taken his bracelet. What matter? A cardinal has many bracelets. So much for Cesare. He woos her courteously and with Spanish elegance, far different from the primitive passion of before. Two grandees of Spain are love-making in an Italian garden on the sly. One is a cardinal, but in the Cinquecento that didn't matter as long as too many people didn't see. The talk of the populace was only "scandal." There is a Spanish element in their dancing; it is in Spanish fashion that they pass from sight, their arms about one another, smiling wickedly into one another's laughing eyes. It is not sheer primitive human emotion that their movements have expressed, but the Spanish courtship of illicit lovers who have the world to themselves for a night, and no scruples.

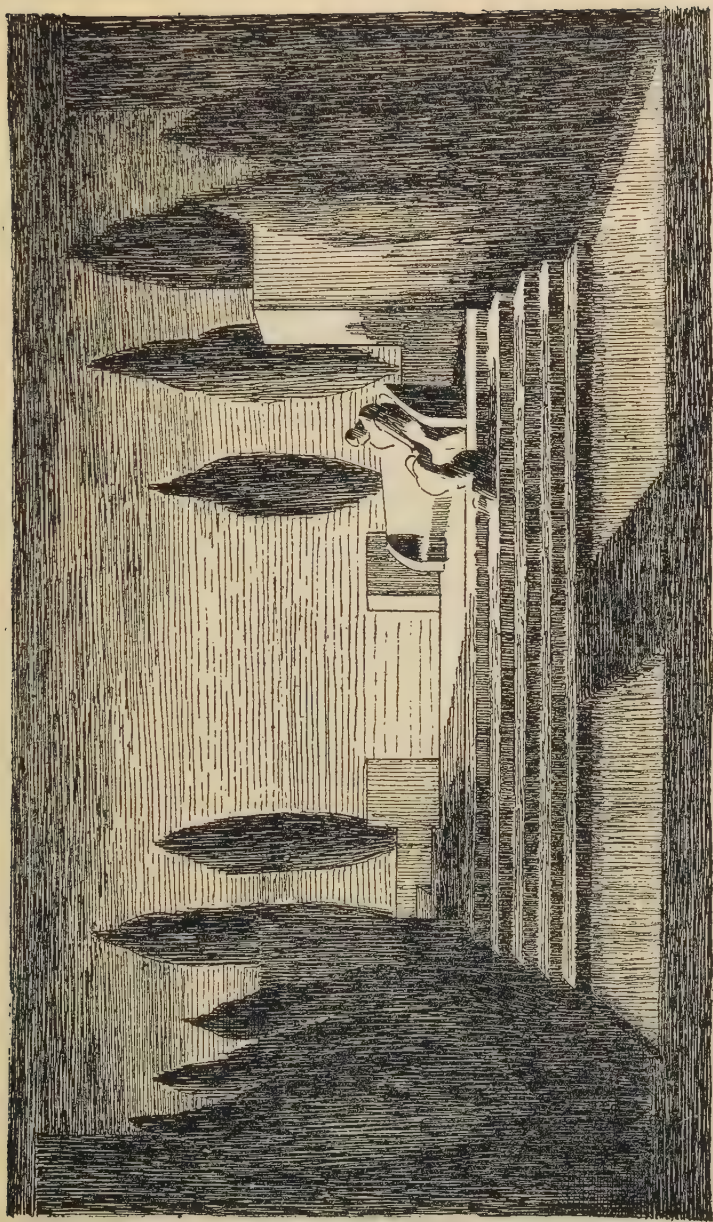
EIGHTH MOVEMENT.

Violante throws herself over the edge of her pillar, and, hanging a moment by her hands, drops to the ground, a vivid green shadow against the background of white. She stands a moment in a tense attitude gazing after the departed. Then she throws back her head. With a movement of anger she tugs at the bracelet on her arm. Impatiently she seeks to unfasten it. She tries and tries again. In a frenzy she wrenches and tears at it. At last she realises that it is immovable. She pauses a moment in thought. The realisation dawns upon her that as long as she wears that thing her emotions are and must inevitably be tied to Cesare. Such is the psychological power of certain gifts under certain circumstances. Frantically she tears at it with her teeth. Then she drops her arms and letting loose the torrent of emotion which swells up within her, expresses her despair, her misery, the bitterness of her heart that so nearly achieved that it longed for so greatly as to dare what she had dared, and had the cup dashed from her lips at the moment of her triumph, leaving

her heart the manacled slave of a cardinal. Then, flinging her cloak round her head and burying her face in her bent arm, she passes tragically from the scene.

Truly not a very dramatic situation, not a very moving tragedy, not by any means a melodrama. It is just simply a subtle little emotional incident outraging some of the laws of reality. It were easy to render it melodramatic. Most dramatists would. Violante would throw herself into the pond that would be situated for the purpose just beside her. Why not? Or the bracelet of Cesare would be poisoned (to the world in general Borgia and poison are almost synonyms, though no Borgia is known to have poisoned anyone).

Having gratified his desires symbolically Cesare would leave Violante to roll over dead, sprawling on her pedestal, or—more flamboyant dramatist—to reel and sway in an ecstatic dance and then fall dead in the middle of the stage. Why not? One is cheap and fiction. The other is genuine, and bears the simplicity and sincerity of reality. Which is the more moving?



No. VIII.—THE CARDINAL'S BRACELET.

The Tremendous Lover.

VII.

The Tremendous Lover.

THE STORY OF DEIRDRE OF THE SORROWS.

PERSONS:

CONCHUBHAR, Ard Righ (High King) of Ulster.

NAOISE

AINNLE

ARDAN

} The Sons of Usna.

DEIRDRE, reared from childhood by the king to be his bride.

A BLIND BARD.

The world upon which we gaze in the dramatic presentation of this legend is no world of reality. No period of history need be before us, nor is it upon the rude interior of a primitive hut or log-built palace that we look. We live in the Golden Age of Gaelic civilisation, in the Celtic Twilight, upon a life that is majestic, beautiful, and primitive.

Our scene represents nothing whatever. It is concerned only in being expressive, in suggesting the atmosphere of this age, the atmosphere that shall most fully aid in the expression of the emotional struggle that is to be presented within it.

The scene is composed of towering emerald-green curtains embroidered heavily along the bottom with the golden lions of Ulster. There are three pairs, one pair meeting in the centre, a narrow opening on either side, with the second pair stretching out of sight, one on either side, and the third pair in front, hung at right angles, masking the wings.

The back of the stage is a raised platform some eighteen inches high. Beyond, there is an evening sky fast fading into night. The scene is lit with the grey and

*mysterious light of evening, uneven and shadowy,
emphasising the majestic unreality of the scene.*

*An aged blind bard sits on a stool, silhouetted against the
sky on the left.*

THE BLIND BARD.

All hath been spoken of old,
All that shall now come to pass.
Sorrow shall fall upon men.
Long hath it all been foretold.

Deirdre the cause of the strife,
Deirdre the first of the fair,
Deirdre the chosen of kings,
Naoise shall take as his wife.

Naoise the first in the land,
Naoise the bravest of men,
Naoise the trusted of kings
Shall steal her from Conchubhar's hand.

The aged shall ever be old.
Alas! when they gaze on the young
Sorrow must fall upon men.
Long hath it all been foretold

FIRST MOVEMENT: DANCE.

Deirdre, clad in a short green garment, bare-legged, with flowers in her hair, runs in through the other entrance. In her hands she carries a bunch of red roses. Wildly she flings these about her, dancing in and out of them as they lie upon the ground. Her heart is filled with happiness, the simple happiness of a young creature to whom the world is just opening up with adolescence, a world uncomplicated by elaborate civilisation, a primitive world in which men are men and women are women, and each act in accordance with their natures and Nature herself. The fierce struggles and passions and conflicts which must result—external conflicts

between one creature and another, not internal spiritual conflicts as among the over-civilised—have not yet entered her life. Her emotions are those of one who has spent the day actively in the wild places of the hills, one who has been near to nature, and returns at evening full of the joy and wonder of the life that is just awakening to consciousness within her.

SECOND MOVEMENT: MIME.

Suddenly there is a sound of trumpets in the distance. She comes to a standstill and her attitude changes swiftly from the abandonment of joy to one of fear and horror. The trumpets approach.

THE BLIND BARD.

Roses, red roses she flings away,
With roses, red roses she strews the floor,
Pools of red roses lie here and there
Blood red roses like pools of gore
Is it roses or blood lie everywhere?

THIRD MOVEMENT: MIME.

The curtains in the centre are parted and held aside by two trumpeters with long silver trumpets. Conchubhar enters between them, three youths in attendance behind him. The trumpeters withdraw and the curtains close behind the High King and his suite.

Conchubhar is a magnificent figure. The features that must be emphasised in his presentation are, firstly, his grandeur, his exceeding magnificence. Already, while yet living, he almost belongs to mythology. In stature, dignity, and richness of apparel this must be expressed as he stands, his crown glimmering in the twilight, on the raised platform above Deirdre. Secondly, there is his age. He is already an old man, virile but grey-haired and worn in feature.

His three attendants must be in strong contrast. The brothers, Naoise, Ainnle, and Ardan, are the pick of the youth of their time. Simply clad in leather corslet and short skirt to the knee, each has a cloak of a different hue,

that of Naoise white, of the others red, and violet. Naoise, the eldest, wears a white plume in his headdress.

That the eyes of Naoise and Deirdre meet and remain fixed for some seconds in mutual fascination is expressed in the attitude of each. Then the High King steps forward and holds out his jewelled hand. Deirdre, meekly, almost humbly, with bent head, and dragging movements steps forward, stoops, and kisses it.

FOURTH MOVEMENT: MIME.

Conchubhar descends to the level of Deirdre and places upon her neck a necklace taken from his own. She accepts it meekly. Then he proceeds to woo her. Her every movement expresses her distaste for him who saved her life when she was a child and has cared for her and brought her up to be his queen. Her every gesture is loathing and repulsion restrained and tempered by respect. Her responses are studied and full of agony. She ever retreats before his advances. At last he seeks to kiss her, seeking thus to rouse in her passion which shall urge her to himself. With a culminating and triumphant effort of restraint she yields herself coldly to his embrace. Then, quietly and a little sadly, he releases her and turns away. As he does so she raises her drooping head and fixes Naoise with her eyes. The High King with dignity and a faint air of preoccupation passes forth as he came, the trumpeters opening for him the way, Ainnle and Ardan behind him.

Naoise, however, remains gazing into the eyes of Deirdre.

FIFTH MOVEMENT: MIME AND DANCE.

In the love-scene that follows it is Deirdre who makes love to Naoise. So says the legend.

MIME.

Deirdre approaches Naoise, still fixing him spell-bound with her eyes. Mounting the step she stretches forth her hands. Almost as though hypnotised he takes them. Suddenly seized with fear he commences to

retreat, but Deirdre hangs on. Thus he drags her back and back towards the curtains. Then she drops his hands and draws herself up to her full height, stretching forth her arms imploringly. He pauses and then advances again. Deirdre retreats. This is not false to the principles of the legend. Such a retreat is initiative on the part of Deirdre as much as any deliberate wooing. Naoise follows her ever more impetuously. Deirdre knows that she has won: Naoise has definitely fallen beneath her spell and embarked on the adventure.

DANCE.

A spirit of gaiety and exuberance of youth, an ecstatic love of life, creeps into their movements, an expression of the sudden bursting into actual blossom of the long-seething emotions of love suddenly released after the repression imposed by the repulsion inspired by the High King. Consciously or unconsciously the actual fulfilment of love long dreamed of and ecstatically imagined is realised to be within reach, and Deirdre and Naoise are aflame with longing for one another.

It is not of a running away on the part of Deirdre and a chasing on the part of Naoise that the dance consists. Nor is Deirdre a skilfully seducing syren. It is but an expression in movement of the wonderful thrill, the excitement, the realisation, the fear, the hesitation, the eagerness, the mutual admiration, the shyness, the boldness, the longing, and the delight of the situation, leading up inevitably to the culminating moment of the passionate embrace.

SIXTH MOVEMENT: MIME.

Then in a few simple moments of mime Deirdre begs Naoise to take her away, out into the world of the glittering night-sky falling swiftly beyond the curtains, far from Conchubhar and Emain, somewhere where they can love and be free. Naoise hesitates. He is appalled. Then he realises that desire and duty are one in this thing. He cannot draw back. Throwing his mantle over his head he takes Deirdre by the hand. Covering her features

with her scarf as she goes, they move towards the opening through which the stars are glittering brightly in a clear indigo sky. For a moment they pause on the threshold when they have mounted the step. With their arms about one another they stand for a second gazing into the future. Then, lowering their heads, they run forth from the scene.

THE BLIND BARD.

They are gone. They are gone,
Deirdre the fair and Naoise the brave,
Deirdre the first of the fair,
Naoise the trusted of kings.

For the old there is only the dust;
For the young shall turn to the young,
And the fair shall turn to the fair.
When the young shall be sought of the old
Sorrow shall fall upon men.
Long hath it all been foretold

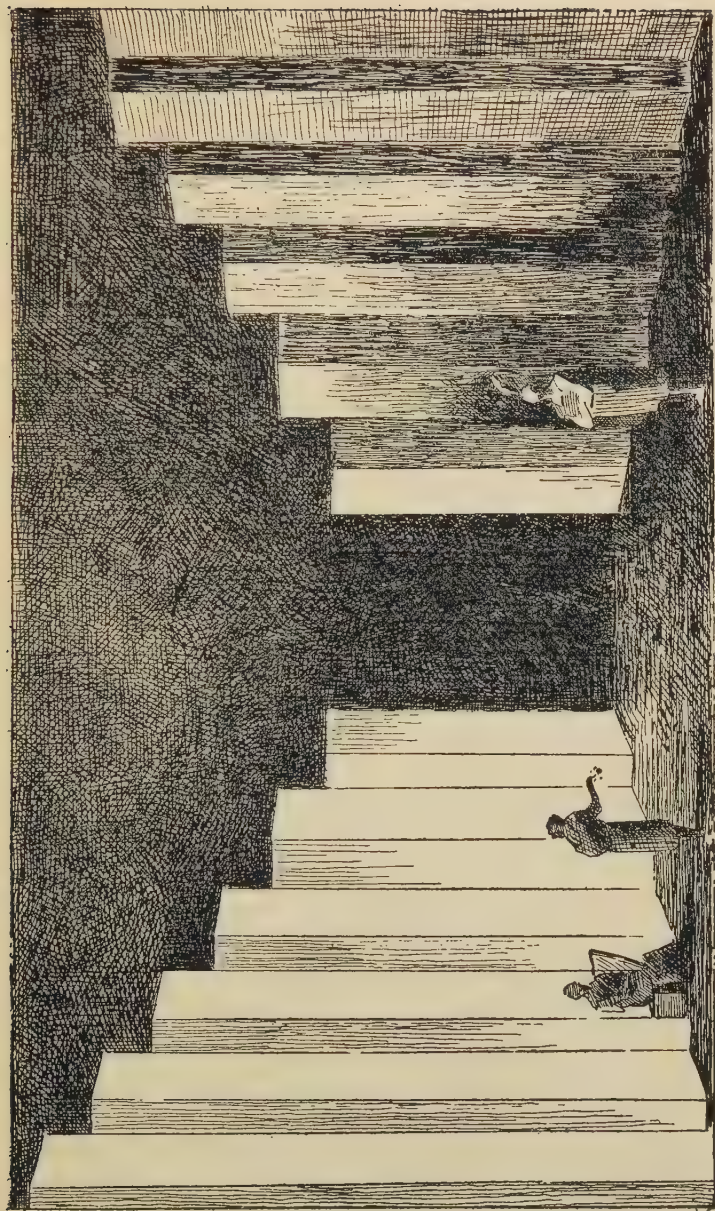
Roses, red roses are strewn on the floor,
Pools of red roses lie here and there,
Pools of red roses or pools of gore?
Roses and blood lie everywhere

II.

The curtains are swept aside, laying bare the glittering night-sky, and revealing in their place two towering pillar-stones between which shines a great, full moon. It is a distant and mysterious scene, a dream-world that lies on the raised platform. The movement is of silhouettes merely, in which the figures are but shadows moving against the sky.

SEVENTH MOVEMENT: DANCE.

The scene is a delicate love idyll. It passes from the domain of drama and dramatic dancing into a world of which the theme becomes too delicate for verbal description, and depends upon music for the expression which



No. IX.—THE TREMENDOUS LOVER. SCENE I.

shall form the basis of the movement. It is also a world of symbolism and fantasy. It is an epitome, an expression of the life of Deirdre and Naoise in the lonely places of the hills.

They come romping in, phantoms almost, dream-creatures silhouetted against the sky. All the intoxication of mountain air is in their movements, all the ecstasy of hearts washed clean with the dew and dried with the breezes of the hills, all the joy of creatures who have returned to nature and no longer know anything but the impulses of their own hearts which are never questioned or gainsaid but always fulfilled, all the freedom of spirit, peace and stillness of mind, relaxation of body, and uninterrupted upswelling of primeval energy which is Nature's reward to great lovers who have cast defiance at the restrictions and taboos of society and given themselves utterly to her.

In the Golden Age of Celtic civilisation men worshipped the moon. It is inherent in the primitive mind. The sun is the very basis of the daytime, it is the source and fosterer of all life, but the moon assumes control in the night-time, keeping a watchful eye on the affairs of men, slowly and methodically patrolling the hemispheres and lighting up all the dark corners of the world. To the primitive mind she superintends the whole ceremony of love, and it is to her that the primitive mind will turn when he or she would declare the clamorous desire of the heart, begging for the fulfilment of the longings that must be expressed, and it is to her that the grateful heart turns in worship and thanks when the blind urgings of nature have been translated into understanding and expressed in life.

So now on the summit of the hills, as near the Deity as man can attain without leaving the world on which he is placed, in the rude temple of primitive men, between the great menhirs that themselves are crude but definitely creative symbols, Deirdre and Naoise dance their prayer to the moon, and their prayer is an expression of their own love, the most sincere and vital of all prayers, expressed

in the most natural of all ways—by movement. The music to which they dance should seem to be the very melody of the night, the silent yet deafening music of the universe, the murmur of the stars rather than an intruding and distracting blare of modern instruments. It should have the unreality and mystery of a great organ, the sobbing and sighing of invisible reeds and strings. They finish their prayer in one another's embrace, and then fall asunder.

EIGHTH MOVEMENT: MIME.

Naoise then throws himself upon the ground and Deirdre kneels and places herself in his arms, one of which is beneath her, so that her head rests upon his shoulder. The music is now the very essence of stillness and sleep, and gradually fades into silence.

Then stealthily, slowly, and with ghastly and portentous solemnity, black shadows, four hooded figures cross the horizon, silhouetted against the moon, and stand gazing, like great vultures, at the sleeping figures between the pillar-stones.

III.

The green curtains are once more drawn across the scene, blotting out the pillar-stones, as in the beginning. In front of the centre curtains, on the raised platform, a great oaken couch is placed covered with a violet coverlet, torches blazing at the head and foot. Before it is a new-made grave.

THE BLIND BARD.

They have made them a grave;
It is wide, it is deep.
Who so strong, who so brave,
Shall fill that ere he sleep?

They have dug i' the ground.
They have dug deep and wide.
Who so fair have they found
That less earth will not hide?

NINTH MOVEMENT: MIME.

Deirdre and Naoise enter fearfully hand in hand. Peering about them, they come forward. They appear to expect someone awaiting them. They express surprise at the emptiness about them. They turn and behold the couch and draw back in astonishment. They go towards it until they can see the nature of the loose earth before it. In terror they retreat from it. Overcome with fear they gaze at one another in horror. Then, suddenly deciding to fly, they run towards the left-hand opening. Immediately a succession of black shadows stalk past, silhouetted against the sky, and Deirdre and Naoise crouch back in the shadow. In desperation they run to the right-hand opening, and again a succession of great black shadows, silhouetted against the sky, pass across. In terror they crouch back and point at them. Then with bent heads and movements of caged beasts they once more come forward.

TENTH MOVEMENT: MIME.

Conchubhar appears on the right, Ainnle and Ardan behind him. Deirdre and Naoise gaze at him in terror. With infinite dignity the High King stretches forth his jewelled hand. Deirdre and Naoise advance reassured. She kisses his hand with bent head, and then moves aside to allow Naoise to do likewise. But the High King drops his hand to his side. Deirdre takes Naoise by the arm and stands defiantly thus before the King. Fixing her with his steady eyes Conchubhar, with a gesture of perfect simplicity and ease, moves his hand towards the couch near which he stands, intimating Naoise with the other and indicating with a flourish towards the entrance through which he has entered that Naoise shall then be free to go where he willeth.

As Deirdre perceives his meaning her head slowly sinks upon her breast, and she appears to shrink within herself. For a moment she stands thus. Then she draws herself up once more into an attitude of the supremest defiance.

With his calm and emotionless dignity Conchubhar smiles and passes his hand from the direction of Naoise till it points at the open grave. Once more Deirdre drops her head and shrinks within herself in her agony. As she does so Ainnle and Ardan turn from Conchubhar and take up their stand beside their brother. The High King still points at the grave, and does not stir.

ELEVENTH MOVEMENT: DANCE.

Then Deirdre commences to beg for the life of her lover. Every movement of supplication is embodied in her dance, expressed at the beginning diffidently and delicately, but ever increasing in intensity, leading up to a culmination of emotion in which each movement is supplication in its uttermost possible degree. She ends upon her knees with bent head and outstretched arms before the emotionless King. Conchubhar smiles in acknowledgment and once more indicates the couch with a gesture of supreme dignity and grace.

TWELFTH MOVEMENT: MIME.

Deirdre rises to her feet and looks Conchubhar straight in the eyes. Then she turns and walks slowly and with dignity towards the couch.

THIRTEENTH MOVEMENT: MIME.

As she does so Naoise and his brothers draw their swords and rush at the King. The curtains behind Conchubhar are parted instantly, and before his assailants are within reach of him, with a calm and effortless movement he takes a step backwards out of the chamber. Naoise and his brothers rush through after him. There is a moment's silence, and then in swift succession three sobs. Deirdre cowers in terror by the grave, her face buried in her hands.

THE BLIND BARD.

Naoise the first in the land,
Naoise the leader of men,
Naoise hath lifted his hand

Ainnle the chief of his race,
Ardan the ruler of hosts,
Have defied the High King to his face

Sorrow on young and on old,
Vengeance and strife in the land,
Long hath it all been foretold.

FOURTEENTH MOVEMENT: DANCE.

Solemnly, with measured tread, accompanied by a funeral dirge six black-clad, hooded and horrible figures bear in the body of Naoise, carried high on their shoulders. With a wide sweep round the chamber three times they carry the corpse to the march of the dead before the horror-stricken gaze of Deirdre. Then they lay the body on the couch which thereafter presents the appearance of a bier, the torches at head and foot accentuating this effect. The bearers depart whence they came and to the same measure.

FIFTEENTH MOVEMENT: DANCE.

With horror oozing from her slightest movement Deirdre approaches the dead and gazes with a terrified and appalled fascination at the face of her lover. Then the wildness of grief takes possession of her. She begins to sway, faintly as first, then ever more definitely, until movement spreads to every part of her body. Stepping back from the bier she mourns him thus with all the intensity of grief and bitterness that movement can express, with all the profound ecstasy of sorrow that the human soul can give forth and reveal through the manipulation of the human body, its most natural medium for the expression of overpowering and irresistible emotion.

Deirdre is a primitive young creature who has just arrived at the culminating moment of her development. The yearnings and cravings, the tormenting uncertainties and incomprehensibilities, the wonderings, urgings, conflicting and inexplicable longings of adolescence have burst into the full blossom of maturity and expression. She has just found the explanation of all

things, her mind and her body have burst into bloom like a rose-bud after a shower, the dark and incomprehensible world has become bright with the full sunlight of happiness, health, and understanding, and her lover with whose person all these marvels are identified, who is the explanation, who is responsible for all things, who is the symbol and actuality of the new world to which she has awakened, has been suddenly taken away from her and lies dead on the bier before her eyes. The world has come to an end . . . There can be nothing else in existence. She does not understand anything as yet, but she is driven to express in movement what her brain cannot for many weary hours of thought disentangle and transmute into the elements of understanding. So, oblivious of the world, she dances thus, pouring forth the uncomprehended agony of her heart.

Then Conchubhar appears on the right, silent, majestic, unperturbed.

SIXTEENTH MOVEMENT: MIME.

Slowly he advances, gazing at Deirdre as, her dance culminating in immobility and tears, she kneels weeping, her face buried in her lover's breast, oblivious of his presence. For some time he stands thus, observing her, gravely, sorrowfully, unflinchingly. Then he steps forward and lays his hand upon her shoulder. Deirdre looks up fearfully, rises to her feet, and draws back, wild-eyed and uncomprehending. Conchubhar stands motionless by the bier, one hand resting defiantly upon it, proudly challenging comparison with the dead. Deirdre does not stir, sullenly and uncomprehendingly she meets his gaze.

SEVENTEENTH MOVEMENT: MIME.

Then Conchubhar attempts to woo. He takes a necklace from his neck and offers it. He advances, and she retreats. His every movement is an attempt to impress her with his own virility and power. Deirdre draws back as though from a serpent. Suddenly she catches sight of something on the person of the High King. She

hesitates, retreats, hesitates, grapples with a sudden idea, and comes to a vitalising decision. Her whole attitude changes, and she seems to submit to his wooing. With infinite gentleness and charm he places upon her neck the necklace which he holds. Then he stoops to kiss her upon the brow.

EIGHTEENTH MOVEMENT: MIME AND DANCE.

As he does so Deirdre makes a sudden movement towards his person. With a sweep of her arm she snatches from his girdle a gleaming jewel-mounted dagger, and wrenches herself free from his grasp. Instantaneously he perceives what she has done.

The High King does not stir. Not an inch does he draw back. He draws himself up to his full height and lowers his hands from his body that she may strike as she will. Thus he stands, motionless, unflinching, dignified, and unperturbed, almost provoking in his immobility and lack of fear. But Deirdre does not strike. It is not hatred of him that surges within her. Probably she hates him neither more or less at this moment than at any other moment of her life. She is not concerned with him as the man who has deprived her of her lover, all she can realise is the mere fact that her lover is gone, and she is left behind in an empty and unthinkable world whose every aspect is represented by the High King standing so unflinchingly before her who holds his life in her hands.

Instead her heart flames up with the idea which has taken possession of her consciousness, and turning joyously, she dances, wildly, ecstatically, prancing, triumphant, perhaps what the emotionless would call insane, round the chamber, flourishing her gleaming dagger over her head with superb recklessness and abandon, and out of the opening to the left, past the blind harper.

NINETEENTH MOVEMENT: MIME.

The High King stands silently watching her as she passes from the chamber. Then his hands steal to his heart. There is a sickening sob, as before when Naoise



A Sketch Impression of
THE TREMENDOUS LOVER. SCENE III.
Using luminous screens.

and his brothers run from the scene. Conchubhar's face hardens in the torchlight, and he turns away, gazing fixedly at the dead face of young Naoise on the bier.

TWENTIETH MOVEMENT: DANCE.

Solemnly, with measured tread, accompanied by a funeral dirge, six black-clad, hooded and horrible figures bear in the body of Deirdre carried high on their shoulders. With a wide sweep round the chamber three times they carry the corpse to the march of the dead before the silent figure of the King standing with averted gaze looking upon the bravest and most beautiful of his princes lying stretched upon the bier. Then they lay the body of Deirdre beside the body of Naoise, and depart to the same sad measure.

TWENTY-FIRST MOVEMENT: MIME.

The High King gazes with set features at the dead woman he has loved since she was a child, brought up to be his queen, wooed, and driven to her death. He is learning that the greatest of kings cannot have all things as he wills, he is tasting the bitterness and humiliation of defeat, he is overwhelmed with an agony of bitterness and grief at the loss of the one thing that was left him that was of value in life, the one thing for which he had lived for so many years in longing and anticipation, the one thing on earth that he truly and passionately loved, his last tie with youth and beauty and the sweetness of life, the dream of his later years.

He turns away. He is old, very old. His virility has dropped from him like a cloak, he is worn and haggard, he almost totters as he moves, his shoulders have given as though beneath a load, and there is no strength in him anywhere. Slowly he passes from the scene, slowly, with bent back, and weary tread, listlessly, and very tired. The sky in the distance is now ablaze with the burning houses of Emain—for Naoise and his brothers were great princes—but the High King pays no heed. Wearily he staggers from the scene, out into the night, bitter at heart, lonely, and very old.

THE BLIND BARD.

It is done. It is done.
That which was spoken of old!
All things are now come to pass.
Sorrow has fallen on men.
Long hath it all been foretold!

Deirdre the cause of the strife,
Deirdre the first of the fair
And Naoise the bravest of men,
Naoise the trusted of kings,
Are laid in the dust of the earth!

The aged have turned to the young
And brought all this sorrow on men,
The fair and the brave and the strong
Are laid in the dust of the earth,
And Emain goes forth in flames. . . .

Alas! for the death of the young,
The young, and the fair, and the brave!
Alas! for the grief of the old,
That have naught left in life but the grave!

